editor's choice

Vagabond

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

vol. 14

English Edition

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Story & Art by
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Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

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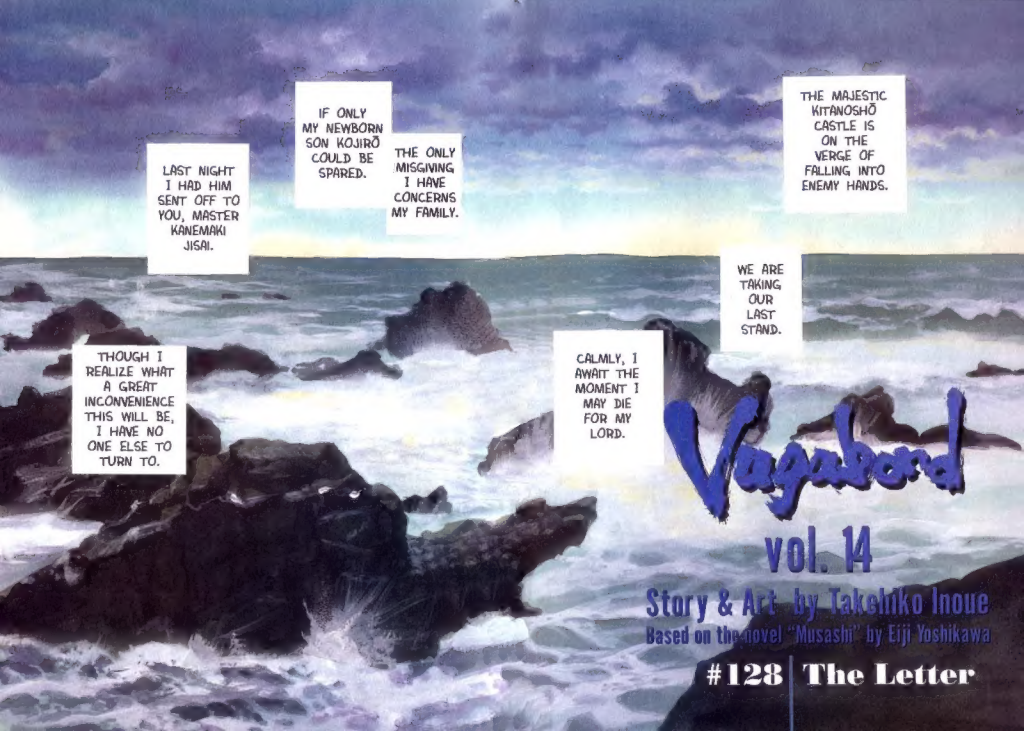
SEVENTEEN YEARS BEFORE THE BATTLE OF SEKIGAHARA...

I PRAY THIS LETTER REACHES YOU.


LAST NIGHT I HAD HIM SENT OFF TO YOU, MASTER KANEMAKI JISAI.
IF ONLY MY NEWBORN SON KOJIRŌ COULD BE SPARED.
THE ONLY MISGIVING I HAVE CONCERNS MY FAMILY.
THE MAJESTIC KITANOSHŌ CASTLE IS ON THE VERGE OF FALLING INTO ENEMY HANDS.
WE ARE TAKING OUR LAST STAND.
THOUGH I REALIZE WHAT A GREAT INCONVENIENCE THIS WILL BE, I HAVE NO ONE ELSE TO TURN TO.
CALMLY, I AWAIT THE MOMENT I MAY DIE FOR MY LORD.
Vagabond
vol. 14
Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue
Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa
#128 The Letter

.....

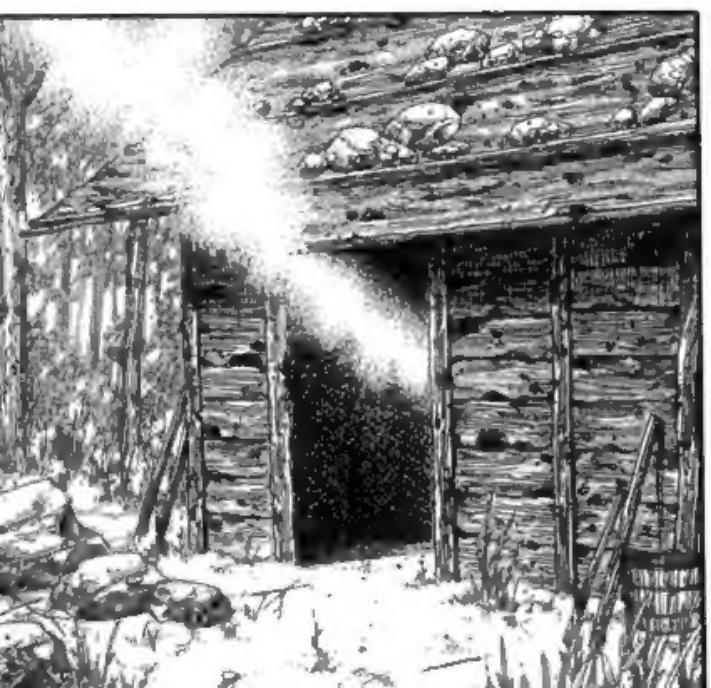
THIS WILL BE INCON-VENIENT...

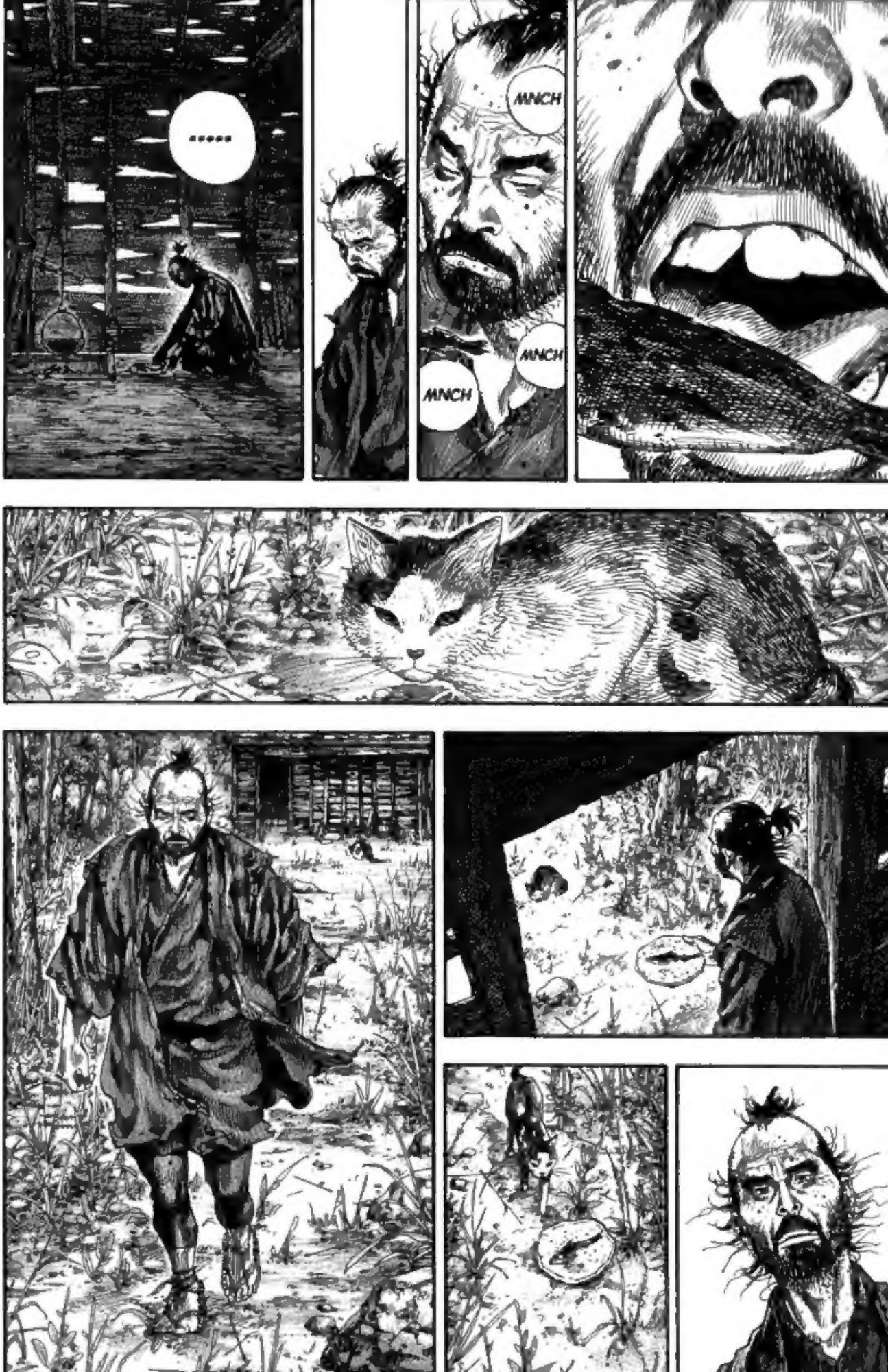
FSSH
.....
CATCH ME IF YOU CAN!
HEE HEE!
YOU BRATS !!
HEY!
FIP
HM?
GOOD GOING, TARO!
RUN!!

STOP IT, YOU IDIOTS !!
YAHHH!
GIVE IT BACK!
STOP!
.....
MY APOLO-GIES.
THIS MUST BE YOUR SUPPER.
I TOLD YOU TO STAY AWAY FROM THAT CRACKPOT !!
LISTEN UP!
HE COMES SCRAMBLING AFTER US JUST FOR A BIT OF FISH.
RIGHT ?
BUT HE'S SO FUN TO TEASE.
NOT EVERYONE'S LIKE US.
THERE MUST BE A REASON WHY HE ISOLATES HIMSELF AND LIVES AS A HERMIT.
HE'S HARMLESS AS LONG AS YOU LEAVE HIM ALONE.

FROM THE LOOKS OF HIM, HE WON'T BE AROUND TOO MUCH LONGER ANYWAYS.

FSSSHH
FSSSHH




.....
MNCH
MNCH
MNCH

I WON'T EAT ANYMORE.
I WON'T DRINK EITHER...
FSSSSHH
FSSSSHH
I'LL JUST WITHER AWAY LIKE A DRIED UP TREE.

*THE YEAR 1583 CE

SASAKI...
ZZZ...
SASAKI...
SASAKI!
HEY, SASAKI!!
THE WATER JUG'S EMPTY. GO FILL IT UP!!
WHERE ARE YOU, SASAKI?!
WHUD
HMM ?
FICH
HE'S RIGHT HERE!

ITŌ...

I CAN CLAIM I'VE MASTERED THE CHŪJŌ-RYŪ!!
NOW I'VE DEFEATED EVERY ONE OF YOUR SENIOR DISCIPLES!!
I AM LEAVING YOUR SCHOOL.

HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT YOU HAVE NOTHING MORE TO LEARN FROM ME?
FOOL! YOU HAVE THE AUDACITY TO CLAIM YOU'VE TRANSCENDED THIS STYLE WITHIN A MERE FIVE YEARS?

AND I'LL PROVE IT TO YOU...
IF YOU LIKE.

BECAUSE I DON'T.

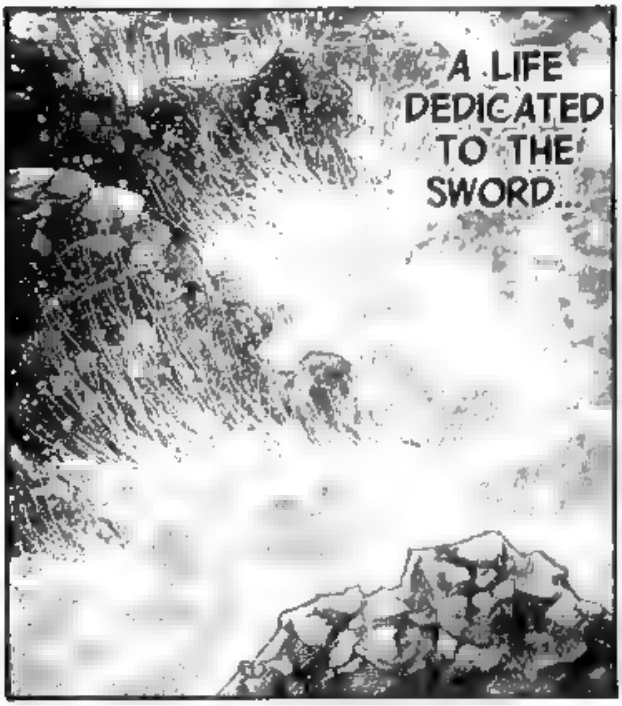
FWOOSH

HE'S BEEN SITTING THERE THE WHOLE TIME.
LIKE A ROCK.

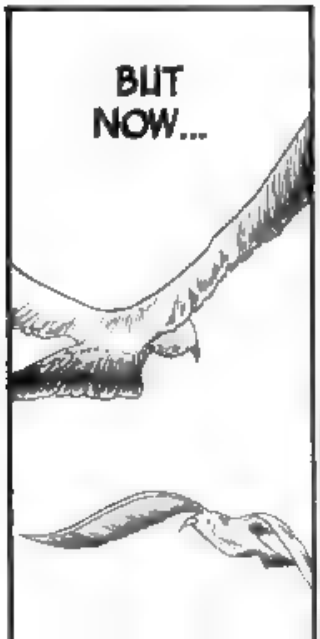
HOW MANY DAYS HAS IT BEEN?

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
.....

UNMARRIED WITHOUT ANY FRIENDS.
ONLY THE SWORD...


A LIFE DEDICATED TO THE SWORD...

HE'S FINALLY LOST HIS MIND.

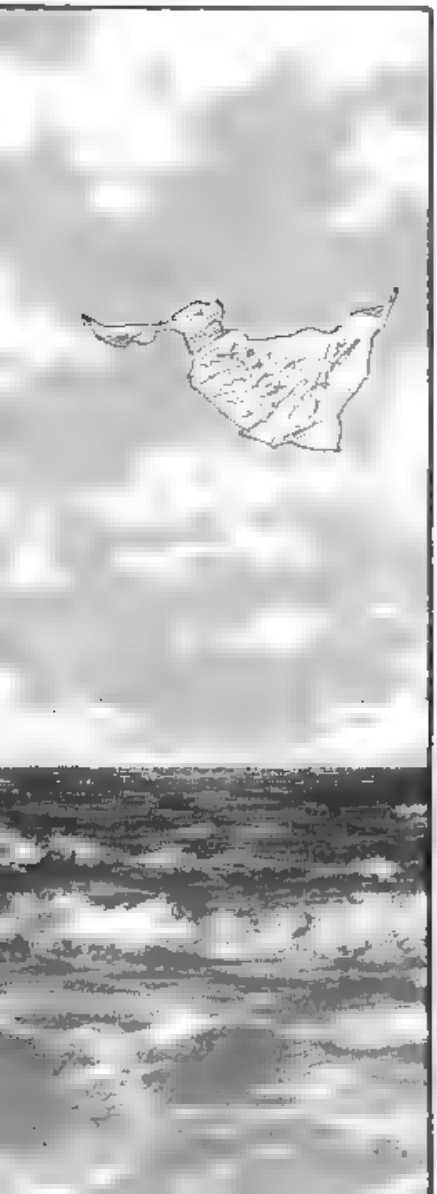

BUT NOW...

THERE REALLY WAS...
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I CONSIDERED MYSELF INVINCIBLE.

HA HA HA!
HA HA HA HA!
FSSSHH
I AM OLD AND I HAVE NOTHING.
LOOK AT THIS MIGHTY OCEAN.
FSSSHH
FSSSHH
.....

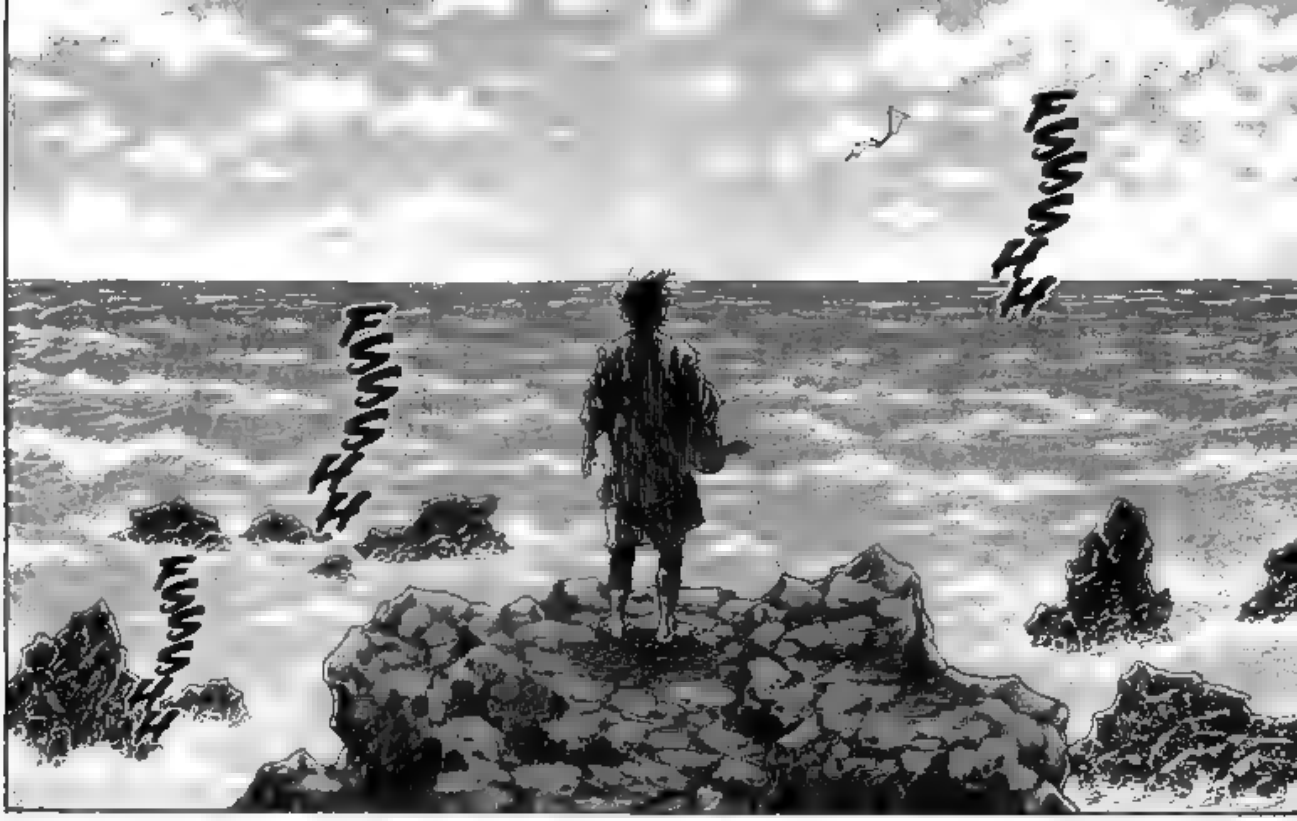
FWSSHH
HOPEFULLY SOMEONE WORTHY AND RELIABLE...
.....
I WONDER WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO BRING HIM HERE...
.....
FWSSHH
I'LL VANISH WITHOUT A TRACE, BARELY NOTICED.
A LIFE AS TRIVIAL AS FOAM FROM THE SEA.
THEY DIDN'T MAKE IT...
THEY MUST HAVE BEEN INTERCEPTED BY THEIR ENEMY.
.....
.....

WHOOSH

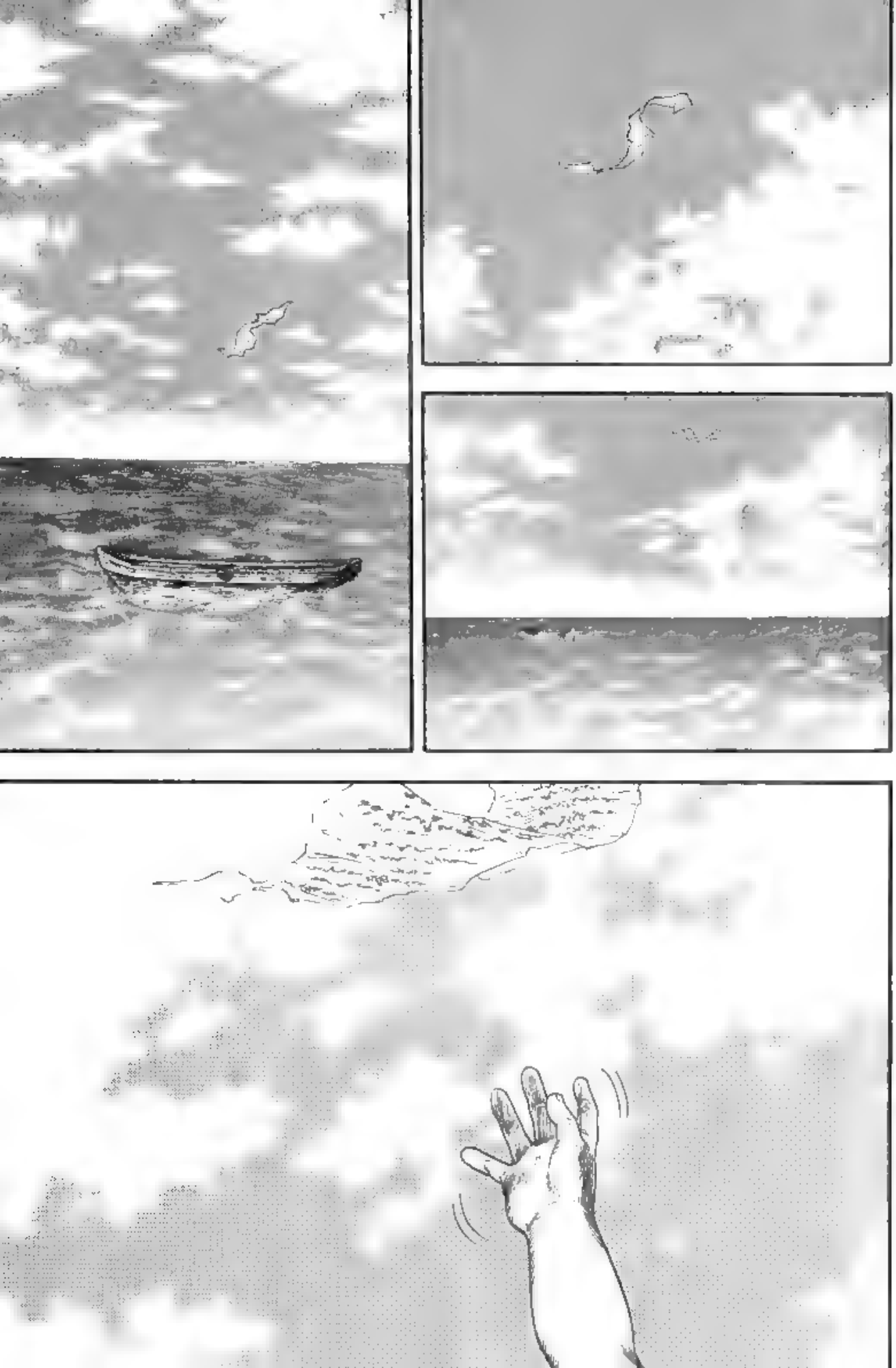


GASP!

NO!
NO!!

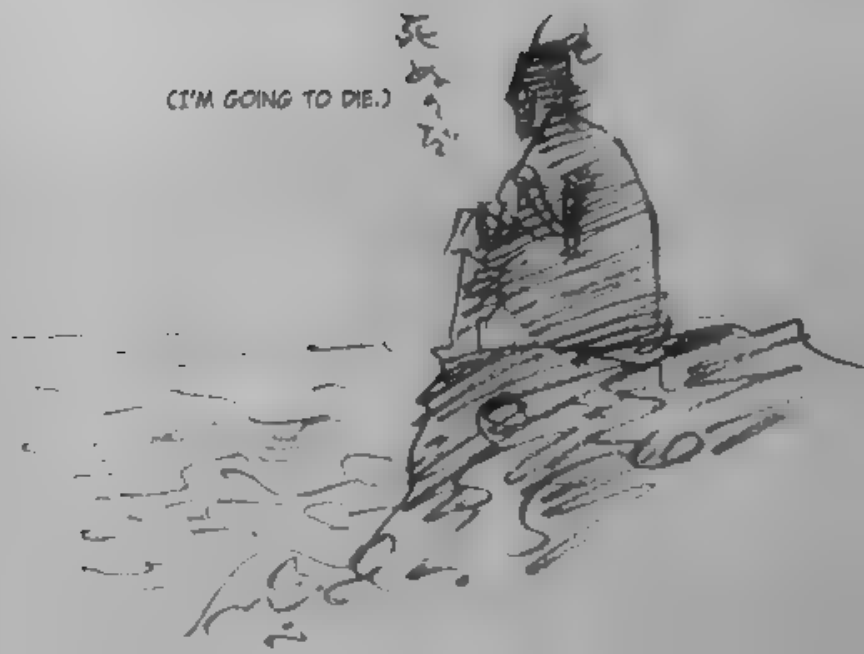

FSSSSHH
FSSSSHH
FSSSSHH

I'M GOING TO DIE.

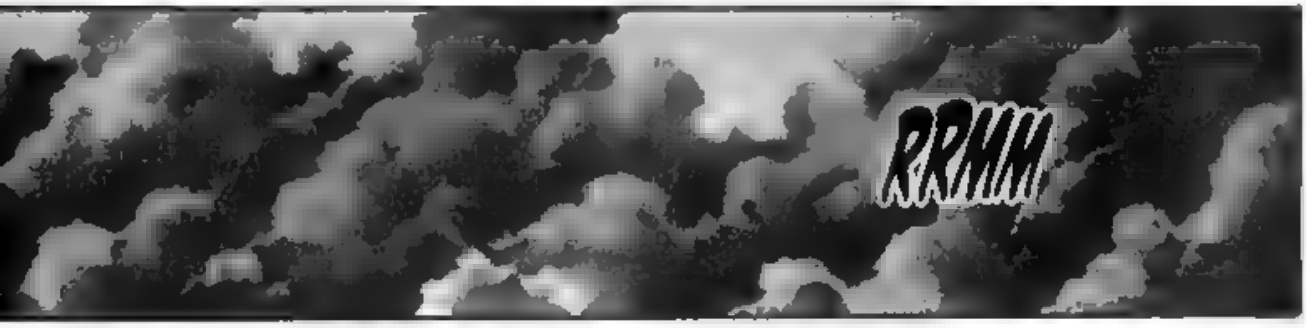


GAHH!

Vagabond


(I'M GOING TO DIE.)

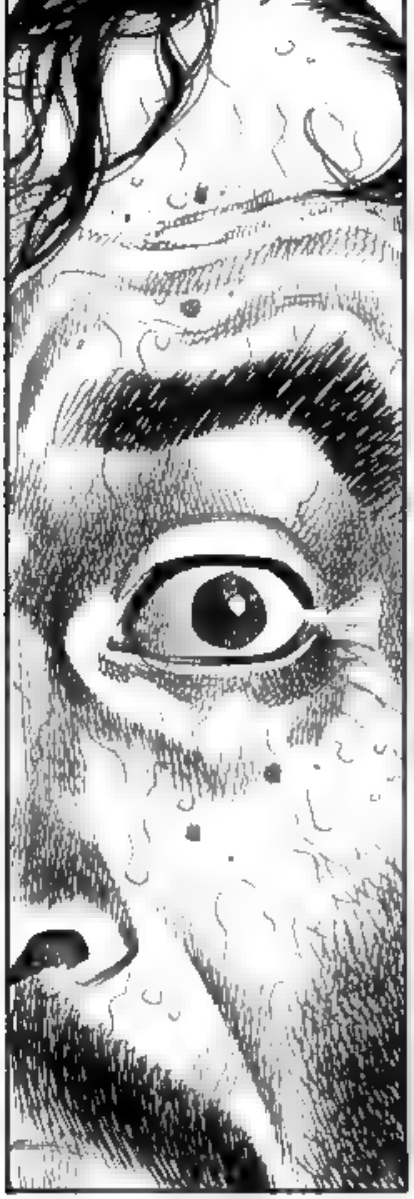
I'M GOING TO DIE...

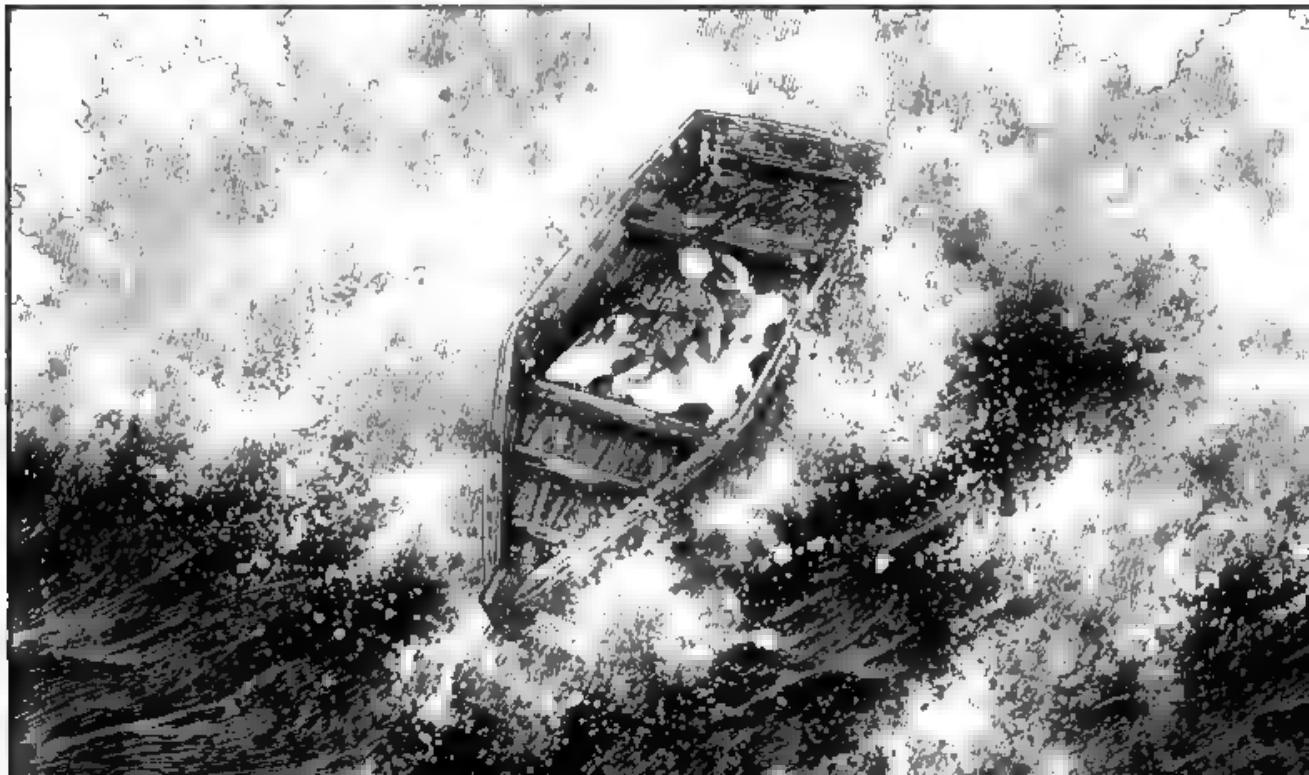

RRHM

#129 Hands
FSSSHH
FSSSHH

FSSSSHH
AIEE
HAK
FSSSSHH
SHLUP
SHLUP

SPLISH
!!
HAK!
KOF!
KOF KOF!
GASP!
COULD THEY BE—?!
!!
SHFF
SHFF

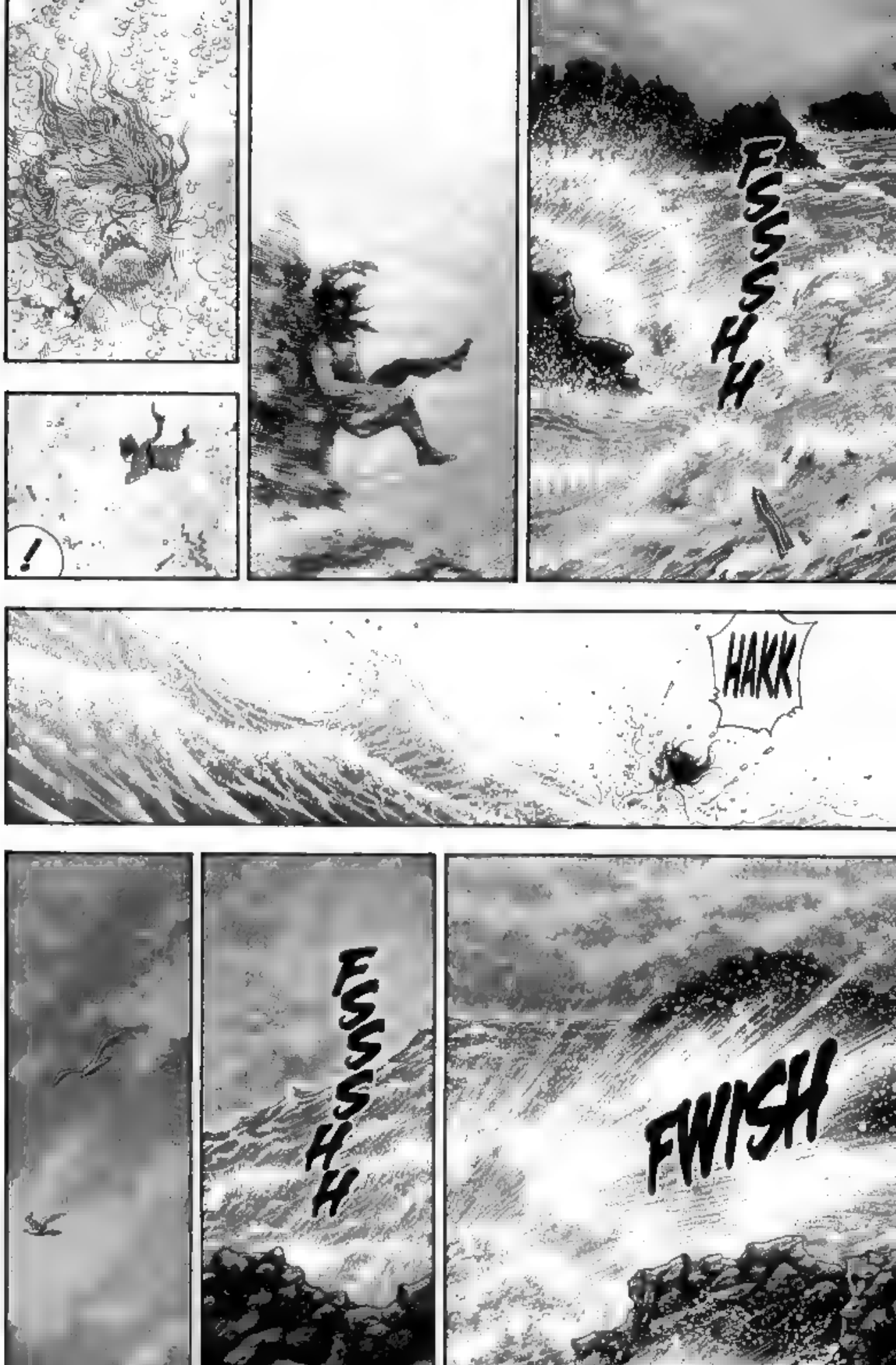




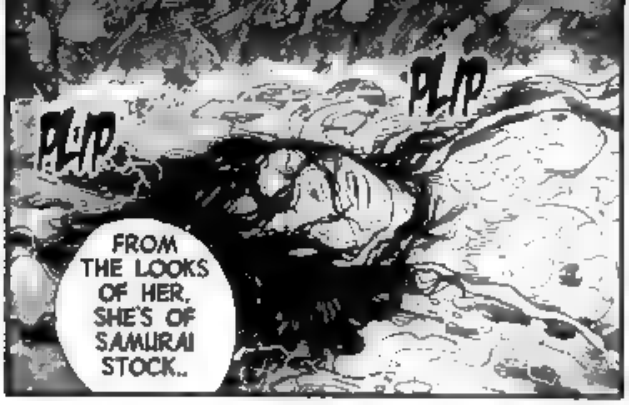
THOUGH I REALIZE WHAT A GREAT INCONVENIENCE THIS WILL BE...
I HAVE NO ONE ELSE TO TURN TO...
IF ONLY MY NEWBORN SON KOJIRŌ COULD BE SPARED...

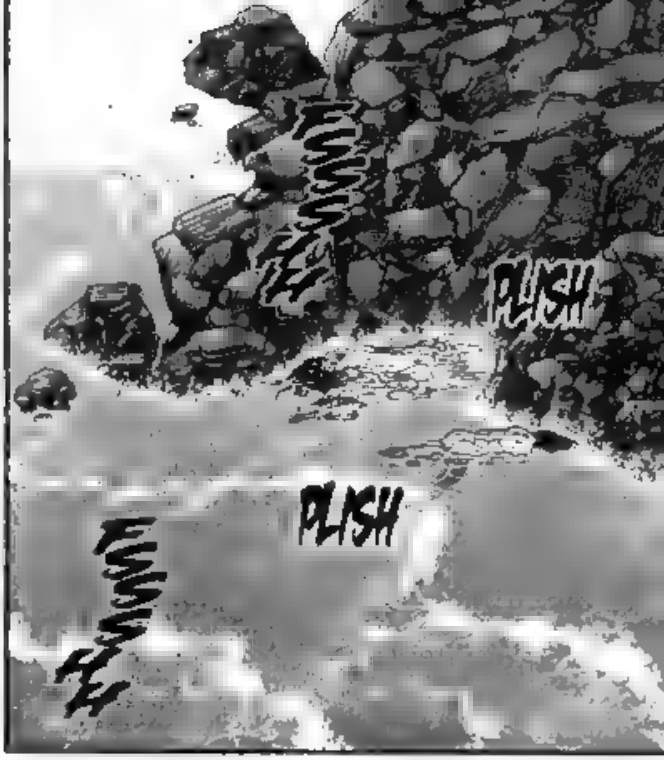
KOJIRŌ!
IS IT REALLY YOU?
KRAKK

FSSSSHH
FWOOSH


!
FSSSHH
HAKK
FSSSHH
FWISH

GAHH
GAHH
GAHH
.....


PLIP
PLIP
FROM THE LOOKS OF HER, SHE'S OF SAMURAI STOCK..


FUSSHH
PLISH
PLISH
FUSSHH

MUST HAVE BEEN SASAKI'S ...
.....

WAAH
GAAH
THEY MUST HAVE GOTTEN CAUGHT IN THE SPRING TIDE...
THAT LITTLE BOAT COULDN'T TAKE IT...

FICH
FICH

YOU'RE A LUCKY CHILD.
STOP YOUR CRYING.

WAAH
WAAH

.....
.....
WAH
WAH
FICH
WAHH!!
WAHH!!
ARE YOU HUNGRY ?
I CAN'T NURSE YOU.
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
WHAT IS IT?
WHY ARE YOU CRYING ?!
WAH!!
WAH

.....

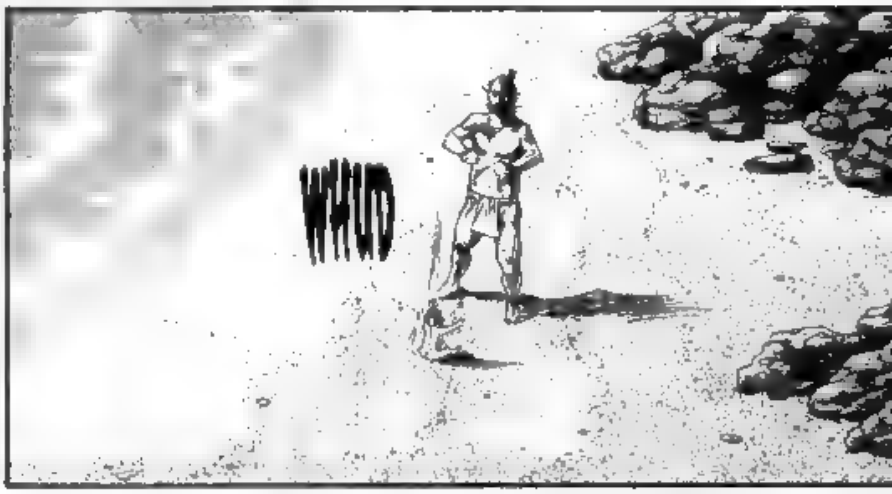
SNF
SNF

NOW YOU'RE MAKING ME CRY.

HERE...
DON'T CRY, KOJIRŌ.

IT'S ALL RIGHT.
IT MUST HAVE BEEN SCARY.
YOU MUST HAVE BEEN SO LONELY.

AH...

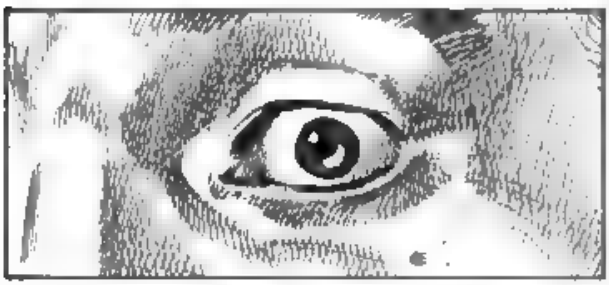

WHUD

I'M SO SORRY.
WAH
OH...
I'M SORRY!

WAHH!
WAHH!

HIS PURE AND INNOCENT EYES LOOK RIGHT THROUGH ME...
FRIGHTENS ME.
FICH
WAHH
FICH
WAHH
I REALLY AM HOPELESS.
HAVE I EVER DONE SUCH A THING?
WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME I HELD SOMEONE WITH THESE HANDS?
WAHH
WAHH

AND ONCE THEY WERE BEATEN BY THE SWORD, MY LIFE WAS OVER.



THESE HANDS HAVE ONLY LIVED BY THE SWORD.

!!

FWOOSH
NO! BE CAREFUL!
!

WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO HANDLE SUCH A LONG SWORD?
KRKKK
KRKKK
IT'S SO LONG.
WAHHH
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT.
HMM ...
WAHHH
FSH
...
HERE...
FIP

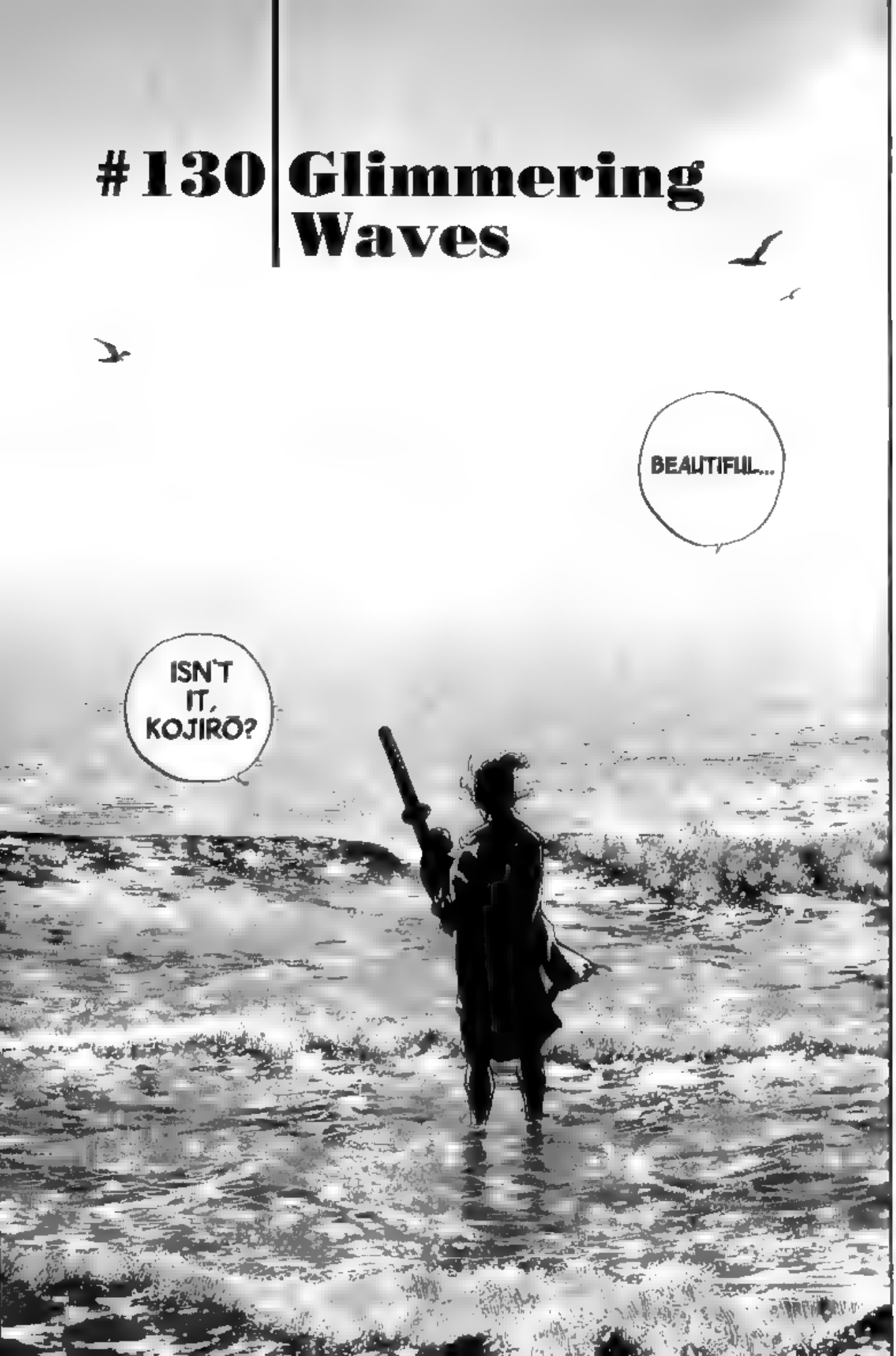
FIP
WAHH
SORRY...
FSH
YOU'RE AN ODD ONE.
FSSSHH
FSSSHH

FSSSHH
MAYBE...
MAYBE I'LL LIVE A LITTLE WHILE LONGER...

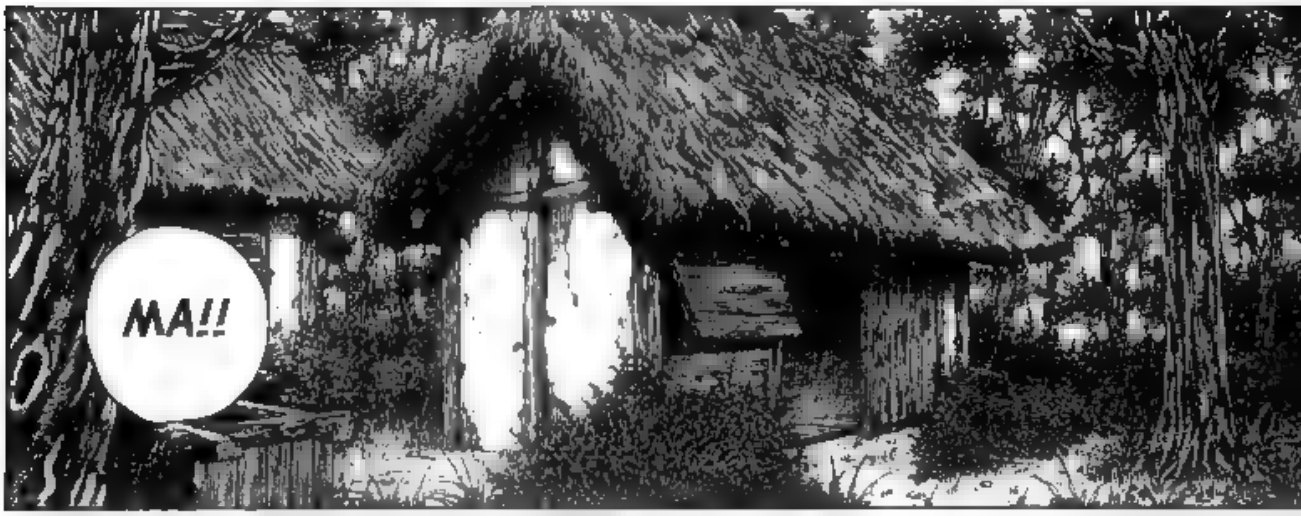
Vagabond

生きる
(I'M GOING TO LIVE.)

#130 Glimmering Waves



...I'VE NEVER SOUGHT HELP FROM ANYONE.
COME TO THINK OF IT...


MA!!

WAHH!!
HE HIT ME!!

HEY...
...THE KIDS...
LET 'EM BE.

MA!!

AH...
LET 'EM BE.
HM ?!

I'M HUNGRY ...

UNF!
LET 'EM BE!!
GASP!
WAH!
HE HIT ME!
AHH!
WAH!
WAH!
FICH
HAH...
LET 'EM... BE!!
HEY...
?!
GASP!
.....

HE NEEDS TO NURSE...
.....
.....

SMCH
SMCH

SMCH
SMCH

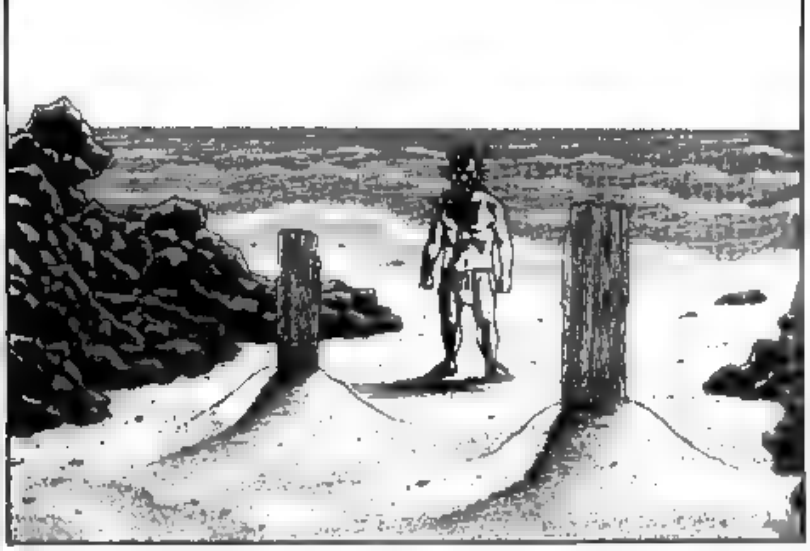
HE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A BAD MAN...
BUT HE IS A BIT GRUFF.

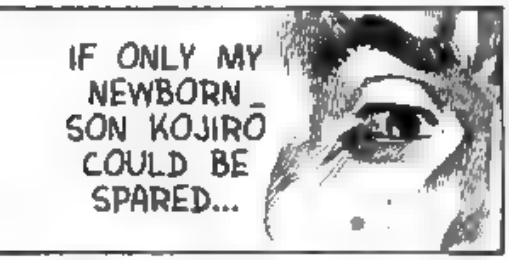
THEY SAY THEY SAW HIM BURY A CORPSE...
THE CHILDREN ...
HMM...

WHAT A SHOCK.

COME TO THINK OF IT...
...I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING FOR ANYONE.
I'VE NEVER THOUGHT TO CARE FOR ANYONE ELSE LIKE THIS.
SPLISH
PLISH
NEVER GAVE THEM MUCH THOUGHT AT ALL...
EVEN MY DISCIPLES...

AHA
AHA

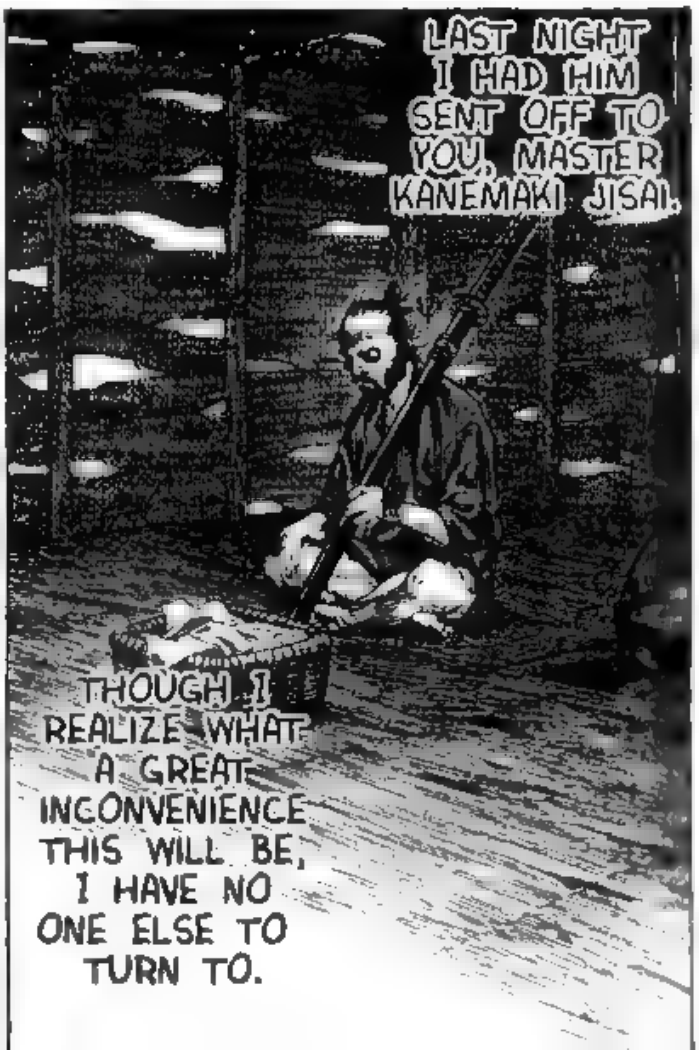



IF ONLY MY NEWBORN SON KOJIRŌ COULD BE SPARED...

.....

YOU REALLY DIDN'T HAVE ANYONE ELSE TO TURN TO. DID YOU, SASAKI?
OF ALL PEOPLE I WAS THE ONLY ONE YOU COULD TURN TO...

WAHH
BUT...
WAHH


LAST NIGHT I HAD HIM SENT OFF TO YOU, MASTER KANEMAKI JISAI.
THOUGH I REALIZE WHAT A GREAT INCONVENIENCE THIS WILL BE, I HAVE NO ONE ELSE TO TURN TO.

I JUST DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES...
WAHH
WAHH
WAHH WAHH

GASP!
HAH!
AHH!
KINK
HM?
FSSSHH
FSSSHH
WAHH
WAHH
WAHH
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

WAHH

FSSSHH
FSSSHH

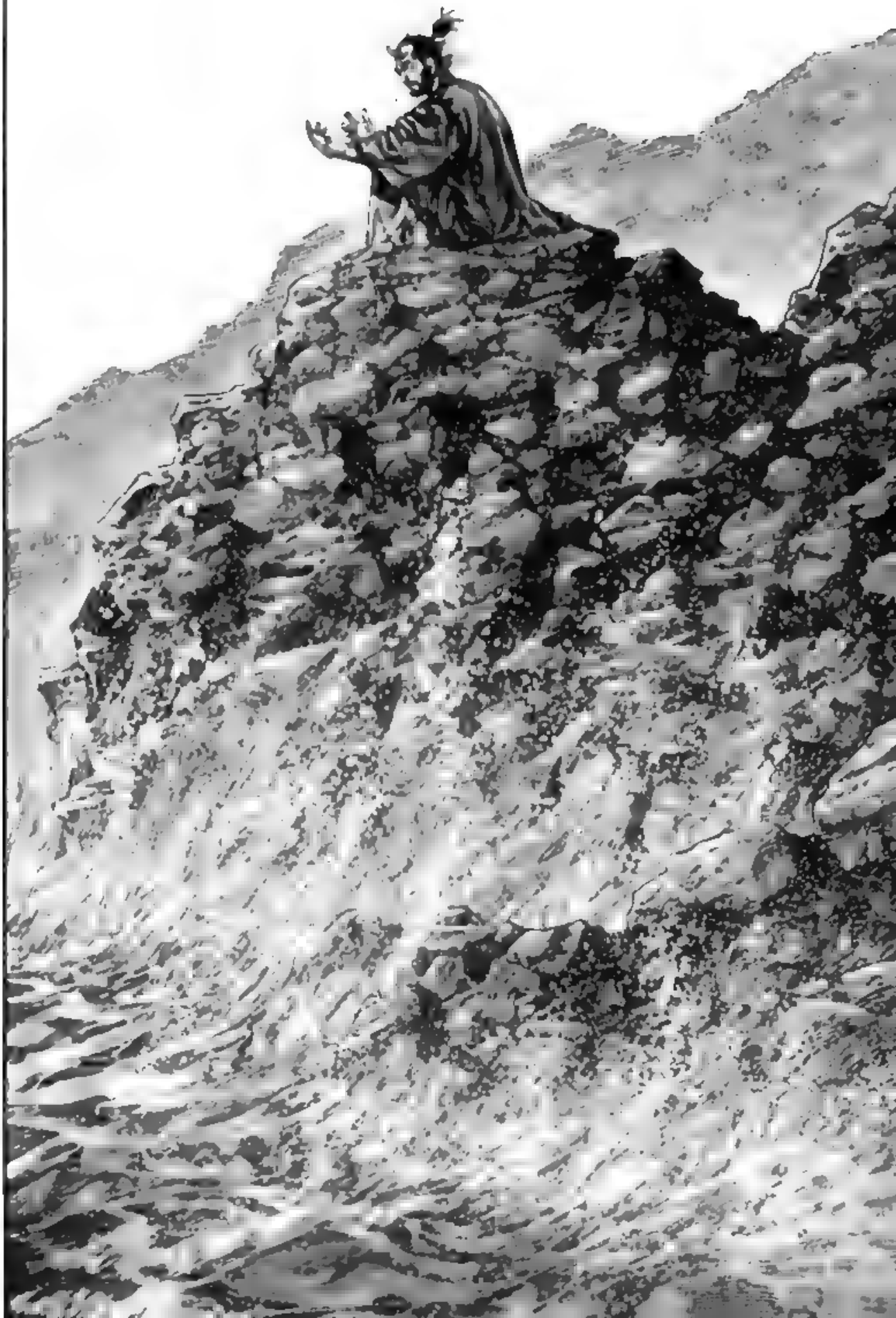
FSSSHH

NOW WHAT'S THIS?
WAHH
HUSH HUSH, BABY.

WAHH
WAHH
WAHH
GASP!
?!
DO YOU NEED CHANGING?
WHAT IS IT?
FSSSHH
FSSSHH
FSSSHH

COME TO THINK OF IT...
...I NEVER ONCE THOUGHT THE OCEAN WAS BEAUTIFUL.
BUT IT IS. IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL...
...ISN'T IT, KOJIRŌ?
.....
FUUUHH

IT'S AN OCEAN OF MUD.
SPLSH



KLNCH
SPLISH

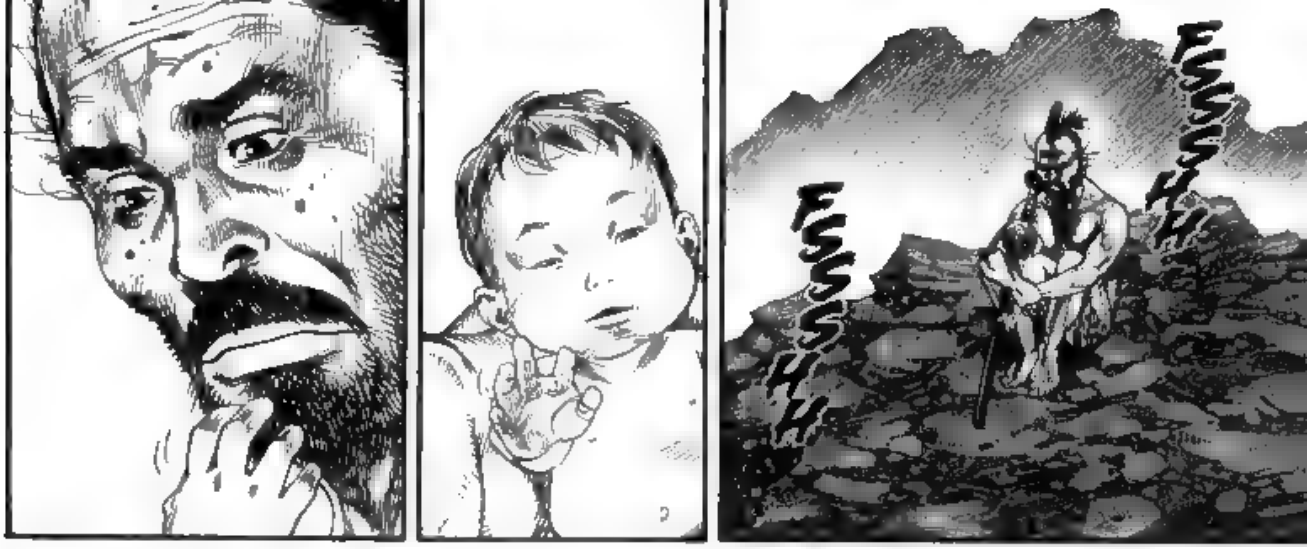
GIVE HIM BACK!
TMP
TMP
TMP
GIVE MY CHILD BACK TO ME!!
WAHH
GIVE HIM BACK?

FSH
GASP!
GIVE HIM BACK!
WAAH
HE DOESN'T STOP CRYING ONCE HE GETS STARTED.
HUH?
FIP
YOU LIKE SWORDS, DON'T YOU, KOJIRŌ?
HE STOPPED.
WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT? HE'S THE ONE WHO ABANDONED THE CHILD.
OH, WELL... HE WAS JUST ANOTHER MOUTH TO FEED...
HEY!

FWP

HMM ?
AHH ...
AHH ...
GASP!

GLEAM
BRING HIM BACK ANY TIME HE NEEDS MILK.
SHOW SOME GRATI-TUDE.
.....


FSSSHH
FSSSHH

NO ONE'S EVER STARED AT ME LIKE THIS.
COME TO THINK OF IT...

I WON'T LOOK AWAY FROM YOU EVER AGAIN, KOJIRO.

Vagabond

(AAA...)

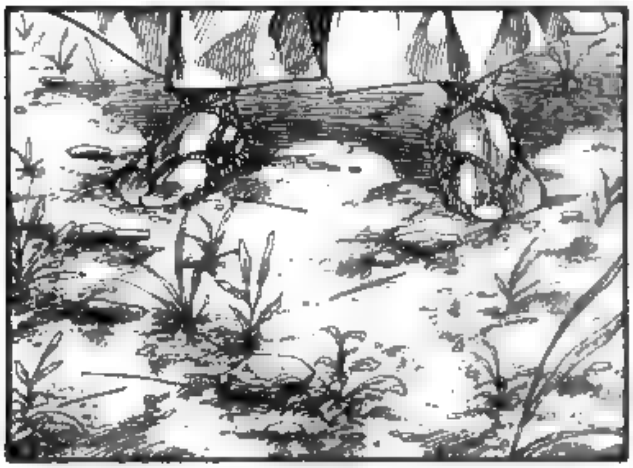
THE MAN WHO HAD FORMERLY DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO THE WAY OF THE SWORD...
...NOW DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO RAISING THIS BOY.
BUT WITH MUCH KIND-NESS...
WAH!
ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS ...
...HE BECAME DIS-COURAGED AND GAVE UP.
...HE RAISED THE BOY AS BEST HE COULD.
...FROM THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM...

THREE YEARS HAD PASSED.

FSSSSHH
FSSSSHH
HEY! YOU THERE!
THAT SWORD IS AS LONG AS I AM TALL.
WHO IS THIS CHILD?

HEY!
SHFF
SHFF
SHFF
.....
KOJIRŌ!
I'M HOME.
TWITCH
FICH

SLISH



AH...

GASP!

HOW COULD MASTER SWORDSMAN KANEMAKI JISAI NOT HAVE RESPONDED TO THAT ATTACK?!
CHAK
THE RUMOR THAT YOU GAVE UP ON THE SWORD MUST BE TRUE!!

MY APOLO-GIES.
NOSTALGIA OVERCOMES ME.

ITŌ!!

.....
WHO IS THAT CHILD?
NO!!
STAY INSIDE, KOJIRŌ!!
IMPOS-SIBLE.
HE'S MINE.
HMM...
SASAKI...?
THE ONLY DISCIPLE'S FACE I REMEM-BER...
BUT I'M NO DIFFERENT. I CAN'T RECALL HIS FACE EITHER.
...
HE'S SO CALLOUS HE CAN'T EVEN REMEMER HIS SENIORS.

YOU CAN SEE I'VE GIVEN UP THE SWORD.
I AM HOPELESS.
...IS THAT OF ITŌ YAGORŌ, THE MAN WHO DEFEATED ME..
ARE YOU HERE TO RIDICULE ME?
THOUGH I HEAR YOU CALL YOURSELF ITTŌSAI NOW!
WHY ARE YOU HERE, YAGORŌ?!
LEAVE !!
I'LL BE ON MY WAY THEN.
THERE'S NOTHING TO BE NOSTALGIC ABOUT !!
LEAVE !
LEAVE !
I AM ON THE MUSHASHUGYO— THE WARRIOR'S PILGRIMAGE. I JUST HAPPENED TO BE IN THE AREA.

FARE-
WELL...
...!!
WHUD
I'LL LEAVE THIS. PERHAPS YOU CAN TRADE IT FOR FOOD.
...
MASTER KANE-MAKI...
GASP!
FIP

HUH ?
DEAF ?
WHAT ?
PLEASE TAKE CARE!!
THAT CHILD MAY BE THE SON OF A FORMER DISCIPLE. BUT RAISING A DEAF CHILD IS NO EASY FEAT.
FICH
HEH HEH ...
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!
.....
SHUF
SHUF
HEH HEH HEH!!
YOU'RE STILL BLIND TO EVERYONE BUT YOURSELF.

TMP

SHUF
SHUF

DAMN IT. I'M STILL SHAKING.

SHUF

FSSSSHH
HUF
HUF
HUF
HAH
HAH

YAHHH!
YAHH!

FSSSHH

HUF
HUF
HUF

FSSSHH

AHHH!!
YAHHH!!

"YOU'RE STILL BLIND TO EVERYONE BUT YOURSELF."
"YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL."

AHH!!
NO!!
IT'S NOT TRUE!!!

FIGH
YAHH!!
SLASH
FOOSH
HMPH!
ARRGH!!

I'M WORTHLESS ...
SLASH
FSSSHH
WORTHLESS AS THIS SEAWEED!!
FWOOSH

Vagabond

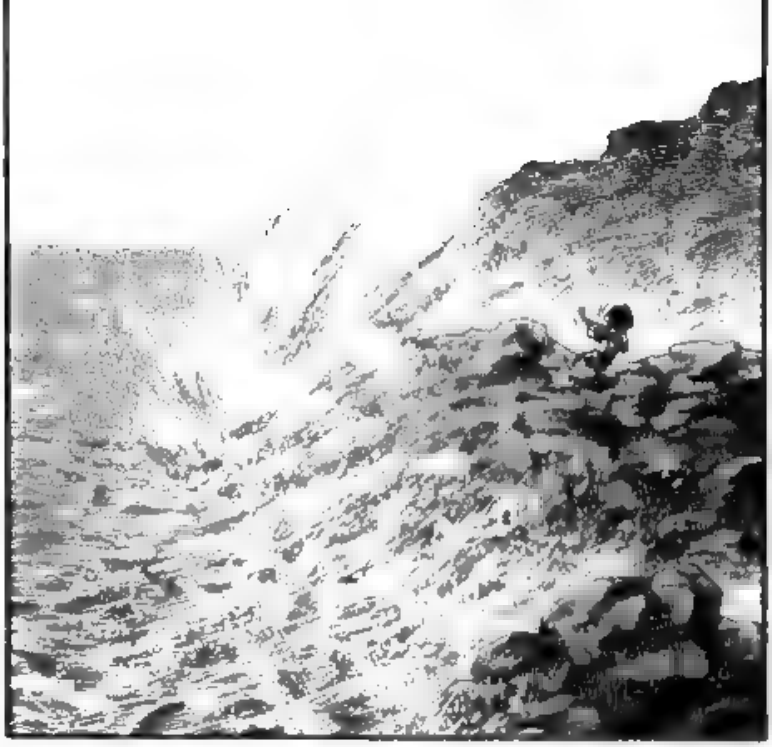
CITO ITTOSAI TOUGH GUY WHO EVENTUALLY BECOMES THE FOUNDER OF THE ITO-RYU SCHOOL OF SWORD-FIGHTING.)

FSSSHH
KOJIRŌ...
I THOUGHT I'D WATCHED OVER YOU THESE PAST THREE YEARS...
"YOU'RE STILL BLIND TO EVERYONE BUT YOURSELF."
.....
I COULDN'T EVEN TELL...
I...
BUT NONE OF MY WORDS EVER REACHED YOU.
NONE OF THEM.
FSSSHH
FSSSHH

YAHH!!

I ALWAYS ENJOYED OUR CONVERSATIONS BUT I WAS REALLY ONLY TALKING TO MYSELF...!!

#132 | Fate



SPLISH
YAH!
FSSSSHH
NO, KOJIRŌ !!
WHEN DID YOU COME OVER HERE?

WAIT.
THIS IS DANGER-OUS.
KAWW
KAWW
KAWW
FUUUSHH
FUUUSHH
I GUESS YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND...
WAIT!
WAIT!
WAIT.
ANOTHER TEN YEARS...
NO. EVEN AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS YOU MIGHT NOT BE STRONG ENOUGH TO HANDLE THAT SWORD.
THAT'S TOO HEAVY FOR YOU...
FUUUSHH

STAY AWAY FROM THE SWORD.
NO. THAT'S NOT FOR YOU...

AND TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE FOR YOU...
YOUR EARS CAN'T HEAR A THING.

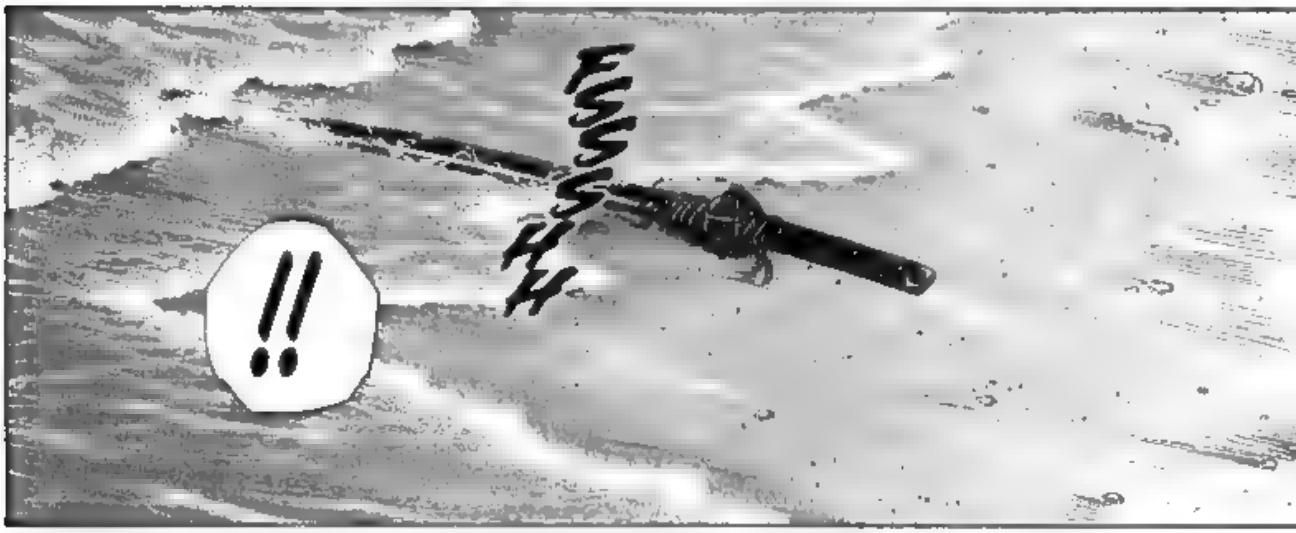
YOU ENDED UP HERE WITH ME.
...WITH ME.
POOR CHILD...

YOU WERE BORN INTO A SAMURAI FAMILY...
...ONLY TO LOSE YOUR PARENTS IN A WAR.
FSSSHH

HOW WILL YOU LIVE?
GAH...

GAHH...

PLSSH


FSSSHH
!!

PLSSH
KOJIRŌ
!!
SPLSSH

!!

KOJIRŌ
?!
HE CAN'T HEAR ME SCREAM!

HE HAS NO ONE ELSE BUT ME!!

WITHOUT ME...
...HE WON'T SURVIVE!!

HUF HUF
I'LL PROTECT YOU!!
HUF
UNDER-STAND ?!
AHH...

FSH
AHHH!
GAHH!
FUUUUHH

SNF
SNF

HUF
HUF
I'LL MAKE SURE YOU'RE OUT OF HARM'S WAY!!

TP
TP
TP
?

FWIP ! FWIP
AHHH!
WHAT'S WRONG ?
GAHH!

YOU'RE A GOOD BOY, KOJIRŌ!!
SUCH A STRONG BOY!!
YOU'RE SO STRONG !!

FSSSSHH
COULD THAT BE...
...A SUBSTITUTE FOR YOUR PARENTS...?
FSSSSHH
IT'S A DANGEROUS WICKED THING...
I'LL MAKE SURE YOU SURVIVE.

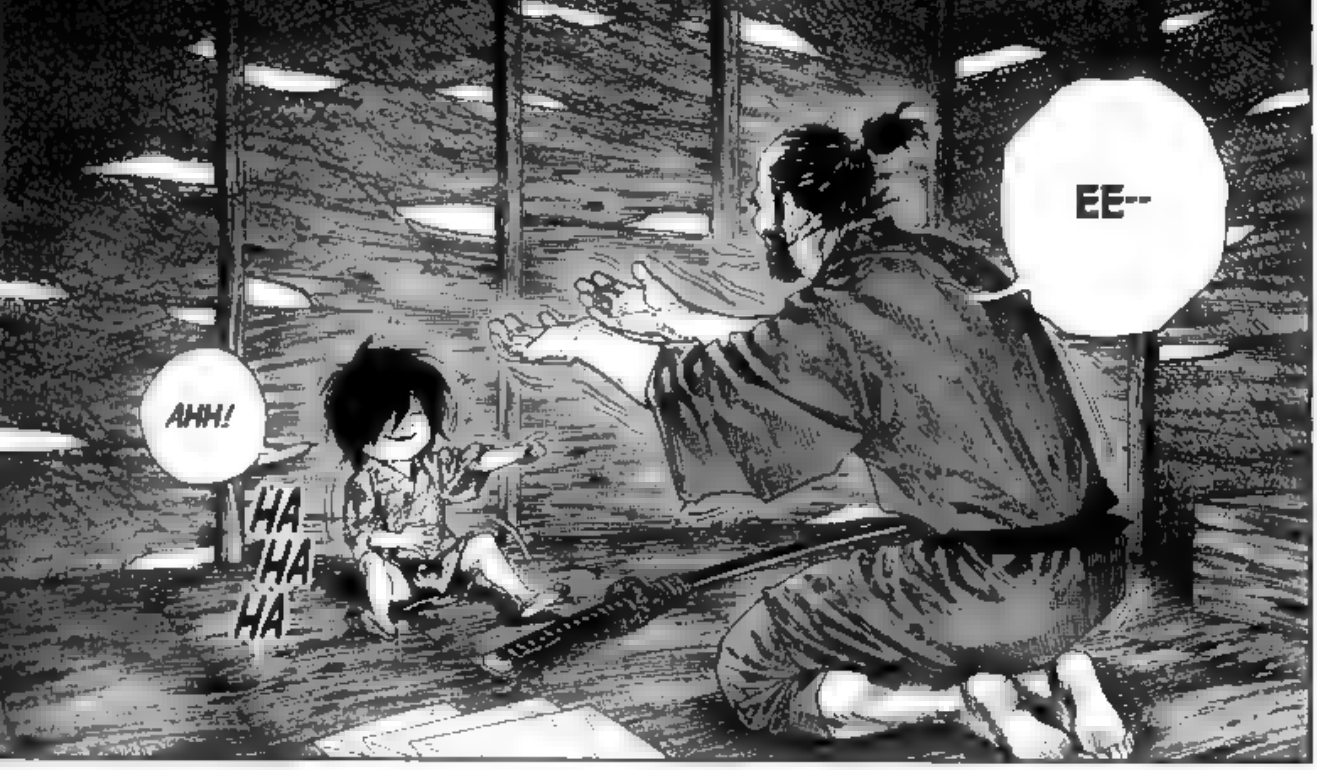
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE GODS HAVE PLANNED FOR YOU...
KOJIRŌ...
I'LL MAKE SURE YOU SURVIVE.
BUT I'LL MAKE SURE YOU SURVIVE.
FSSSHH

Vagabond

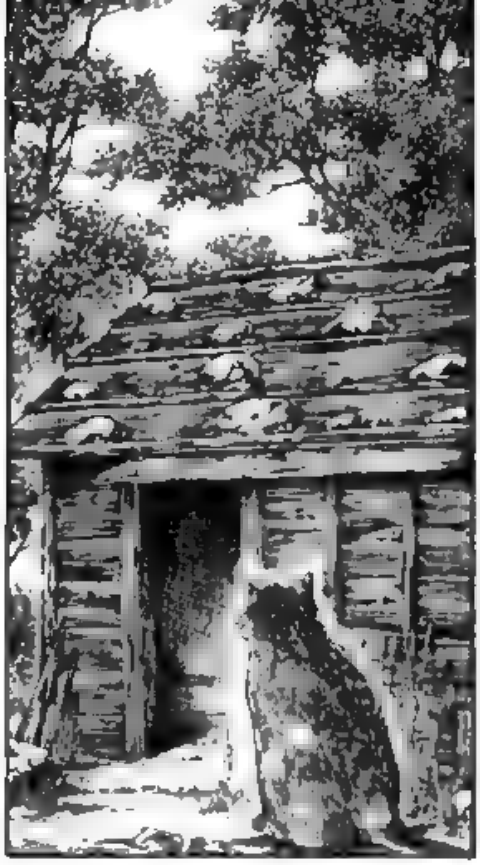
(MUST TAKE CARE OF THIS.)

#133 | To Live by the Sword

"EE--"
SHAPE YOUR MOUTH LIKE THIS.
KOJIRŌ, THIS IS PRO-NOUNCED "EE--"
AS IN "I-RO-HA."
FROM THE POEM-BASED SYLLABARY.
EE--
THEN YOU EXHALE FROM DEEP INSIDE YOUR THROAT...
...AND SAY "EE--"
YOU CAN DO IT!
YOU'VE GOT IT! NOW FROM THE THROAT ...
EE--
EE--
NOW, YOU...
LIKE THIS.
NOW JUST EXHALE.
THAT'S RIGHT.



NE-KO (CAT)



I-TA-I (PAIN)

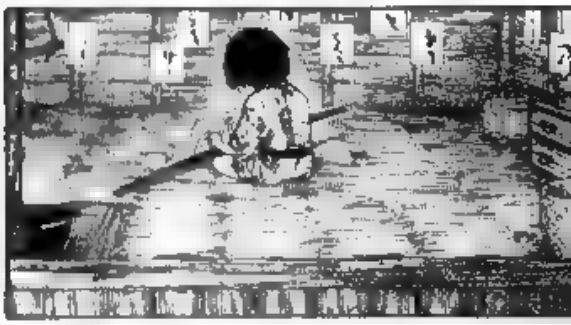
THIS IS YOUR NAME.
KOJIRŌ.
KO-
-JI-
-RŌ.
KOJIRŌ
KOJIRŌ!
WHAT AM I DOING? WHY HAVE I STOPPED TALKING OUT LOUD?
YOUR NAME IS KOJIRŌ!
I'LL RAISE HIM TO BE A GOOD MAN.

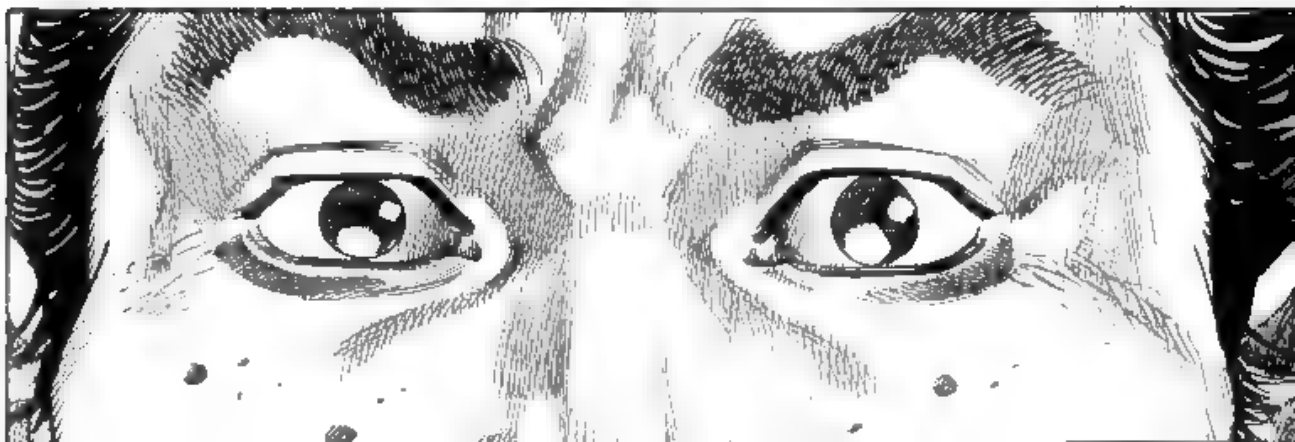
A GOOD MAN...
ME.
WHAT?! LEARN TO BE A FISHERMAN ?
WHO ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
HOW OLD ARE YOU?
YOU HAVE TO KNOW THE OCEAN INSIDE AND OUT TO BE A FISHER-MAN.
THERE'S MORE TO THE SEA THAN WHAT'S ON THE SURFACE.
FSSSSHH

GET OUT OF HERE.
IT'S TOO LATE FOR YOU.
YOU MUST ALSO BE FAMILIAR WITH EVERY RIDGE AND CREVICE OF THE OCEAN FLOOR.
WHAT'S THAT OLD COOT THINKING?
HOW LONG DOES HE THINK WE'VE BEEN DOING THIS?
WHAT NERVE!
BUT I'VE ONLY LIVED BY THE SWORD.
WHAT CAN I DO? I'VE NEVER DONE ANY-THING ELSE.
I'M HOPELESS...
I MUST FIND A TRADE.
OTHERWISE, IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO RAISE HIM TO BE A DECENT HUMAN BEING. KOJIRŌ WILL END UP STARVING.

THE SWORD...
LIVING BY THE SWORD...

I'M HOME!
HMM ?





KOJIRŌ, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
THAT'S DANGEROUS.

.....

FWAK

TP
TP
TP
TP

FSSSHH

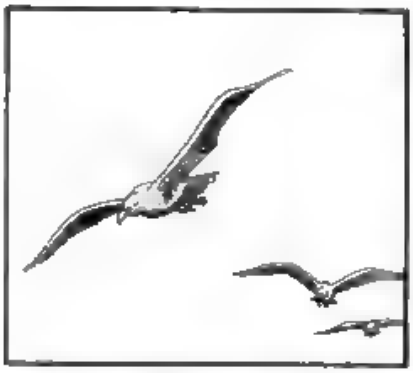
FSSSHH

FSSSHH
WHAT AN ODD SIGHT...
SNIF SNIF

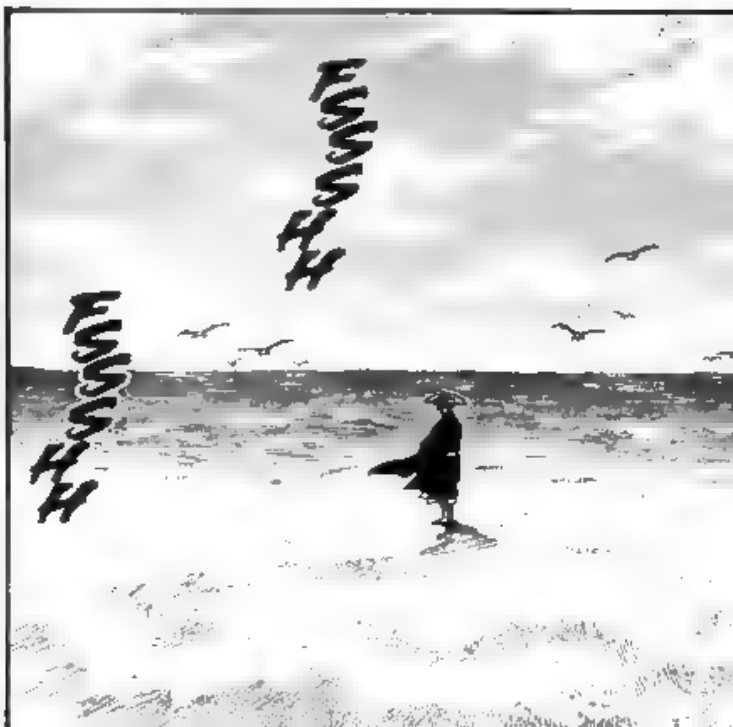
WHAT HAVE WE HERE?
LITTLE ONE...
?
.....
HM?
IT'S BIGGER THAN YOU.
THAT'S A MIGHTY SWORD.

HM?

YOU WANT TO SHOW YOUR SWORD OFF TO ME, IS THAT IT?
OH, YOU'RE HANDING IT TO ME?
LET'S SEE IT THEN...
IT IS INDEED IMPRES-SIVE.

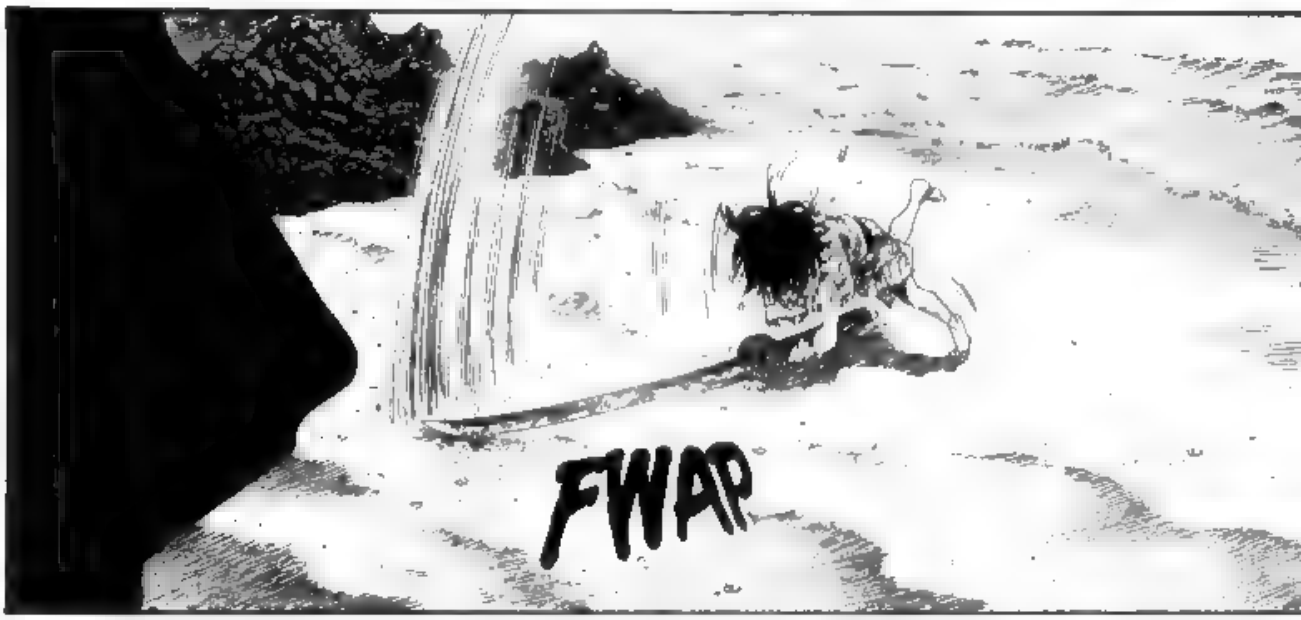


SNF SNF
IT'S THE PRICE I PAY FOR A LONG JOURNEY. FORGIVE ME.
YOUR NOSE IS TOO SENSITIVE.
I THOUGHT I COULD GO WITHOUT BATHING A WHILE LONGER...
I SMELL THAT BAD?


FSSSHH
FSSSHH

EVEN MOST FULL-GROWN ADULTS WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO HANDLE THAT THING.
HA HA HA!
HEY...
YOUR FATHER MUST BE A SAMURAI.
SSHT
SSHT
HEY!!!
HEY!
LITTLE ONE!
HEY!!

HE'S
DEAF...


FWAP

HMM...
I SEE... THAT SWORD INVIGORATES YOU.
HOW-EVER...

SHK

IT CAN ALSO BE THE DEATH OF YOU.

AHHH!
GAHH!!

TUGG
TUGG
AHHH!
AHHH!

...LOOK OVER AND PROTECT THIS CHILD...
MAY THIS SWORD...
AHHHH!

FICH
FICH

FSSSHH

SNF
SNF

HM?
STOPPED CRYING ALREADY ?
WHAT AN ODD CHILD.
HMM... WHERE SHOULD I GO?
PERHAPS I'LL PAY OLD MAN YAGYŪ A VISIT.
SHUF
SHUF

CHUJO-RYU SWORDSMANSHIP INSTRUCTION, KANEMAKI JISAI

Vagabond

(IN HIS TWENTIES.)
2014 →
(HUH?)

#134 Driftwood
GOSLIKE. YOU'VE DONE SOME SWORD-FIGHTING.
HOW'S THE OLD COOT'S FORM?
FWISH
.....
FWISH
THERE ISN'T MUCH BEHIND IT.

IT'S MORE OF A MID-SIZED SWORD.
IF IT'S MASTER TODA SEIGEN'S CHŪJŌ-RYŪ, HE SHOULD BE USING A SHORT SWORD.
BUT THAT CRAZY OLD COOT'S WOODEN SWORD IS TOO LONG.

WHAT'S THE CHŪJŌ-RYŪ?

HE'S TRYING TO SWINDLE US.
HE THINKS VILLAGERS LIKE US CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE...
THAT OLD COOT...

KEEP SWINGING AWAY, OLD MAN.
HA HA HA.
WHO'D TAKE LESSONS FROM HIM?!

LOOK! HE'S ALREADY OUT OF BREATH.

.....
FSSSSHH
FSSSSHH

KOJIRO, I'M HOME!
SHF
SHF
UMF.
.....
LOOKING FOR YOUR LONG SWORD, KOJIRO?
HMM ...

HEY...

DIDN'T FIND IT, DID YOU?
YOU MUST'VE SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY LOOKING FOR IT.

AHHH...
GAHHH...

AHHH!
KOJIRO...
I'VE HIDDEN IT AWAY.
IT'S NOT GOOD FOR A FOUR-YEAR-OLD TO CLING TO A SWORD THE WAY YOU DO...
I MADE THIS TOP FOR YOU.
YOU MUST TRY TO BE MORE LIKE A NORMAL CHILD.
SWAP

AHH!
AH! AH!
GAUHH!
AHH!
IT'S TIME TO MAKE SUPPER.
YOU HAVE TO LIVE A DECENT LIFE!!
AH! AH!

SWAK
AHH!
!!
KOJIRO !!
FWAK
KINK
FWAK
UNGH!

AHHH!
AHHH!!

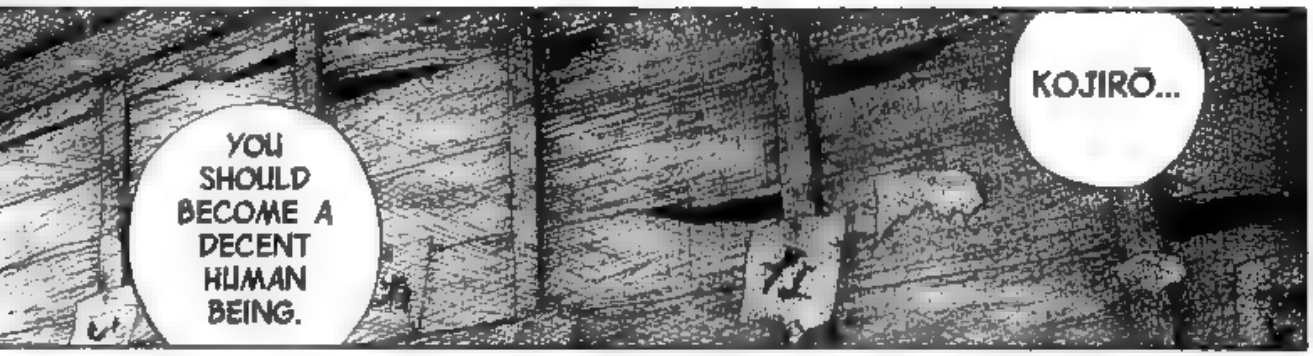
WAK

HUF
HUF
HUF

THUD

HUF
HUF
HUF
YOU CAN'T HEAR MY SHOUTING ...
A SWORD IS NO TOY!!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!! YOU MUST STAY AWAY FROM SUCH THINGS!!
.....
...
AHHH...
SNIF...
AHH...

.....
SWIP
SWIP
THE SWORD CAN DRIVE MEN TO MADNESS...
TO LIVE BY THE SWORD ...
IF YOU NEED TO SEE WHAT IT CAN DO TO A MAN...
...JUST LOOK AT ME...
I'M SORRY...
WHY DON'T YOU TRY TO JOIN THEM?
DON'T YOU WANT TO PLAY WITH THE KIDS IN THE VILLAGE, KOJIRO?
YOU MIGHT MAKE FRIENDS!
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE...
I...


KOJIRŌ...
YOU SHOULD BECOME A DECENT HUMAN BEING.

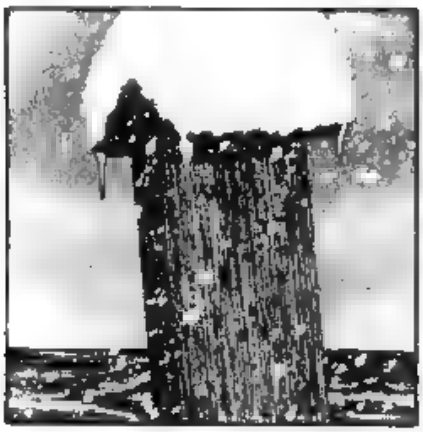
DON'T YOU WORRY. I CLEANED THAT SWORD AND PUT IT AWAY.
I'LL GIVE IT BACK TO YOU WHEN YOU'RE OLDER AND ALL GROWN...

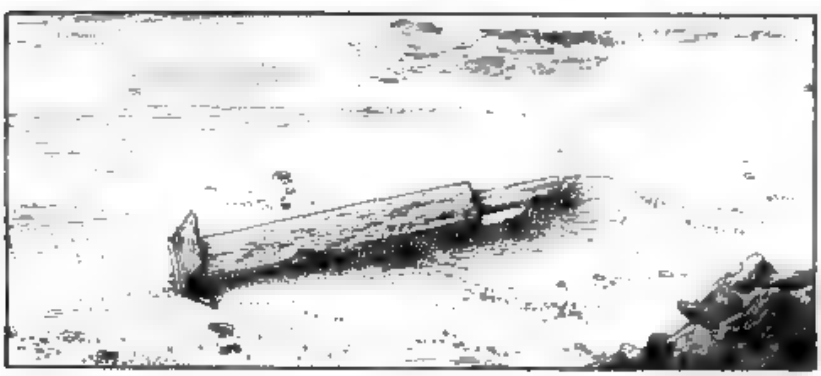
KEN (SWORD)

THAT'S RIGHT-- SWORD!
THAT'S IT!
SWORD !!
HA HA!
UHH...
THAT'S ...
KOJIRŌ ...
YOU UNDER-STAND?
GOOD GOING, KOJIRŌ!!
AUH!!
NO SWORD FOR YOU!!
HA HA HA HA!
KOJIRŌ!!

FWOOSHH
NO ONE'S COMING ...

FSSSHHHH





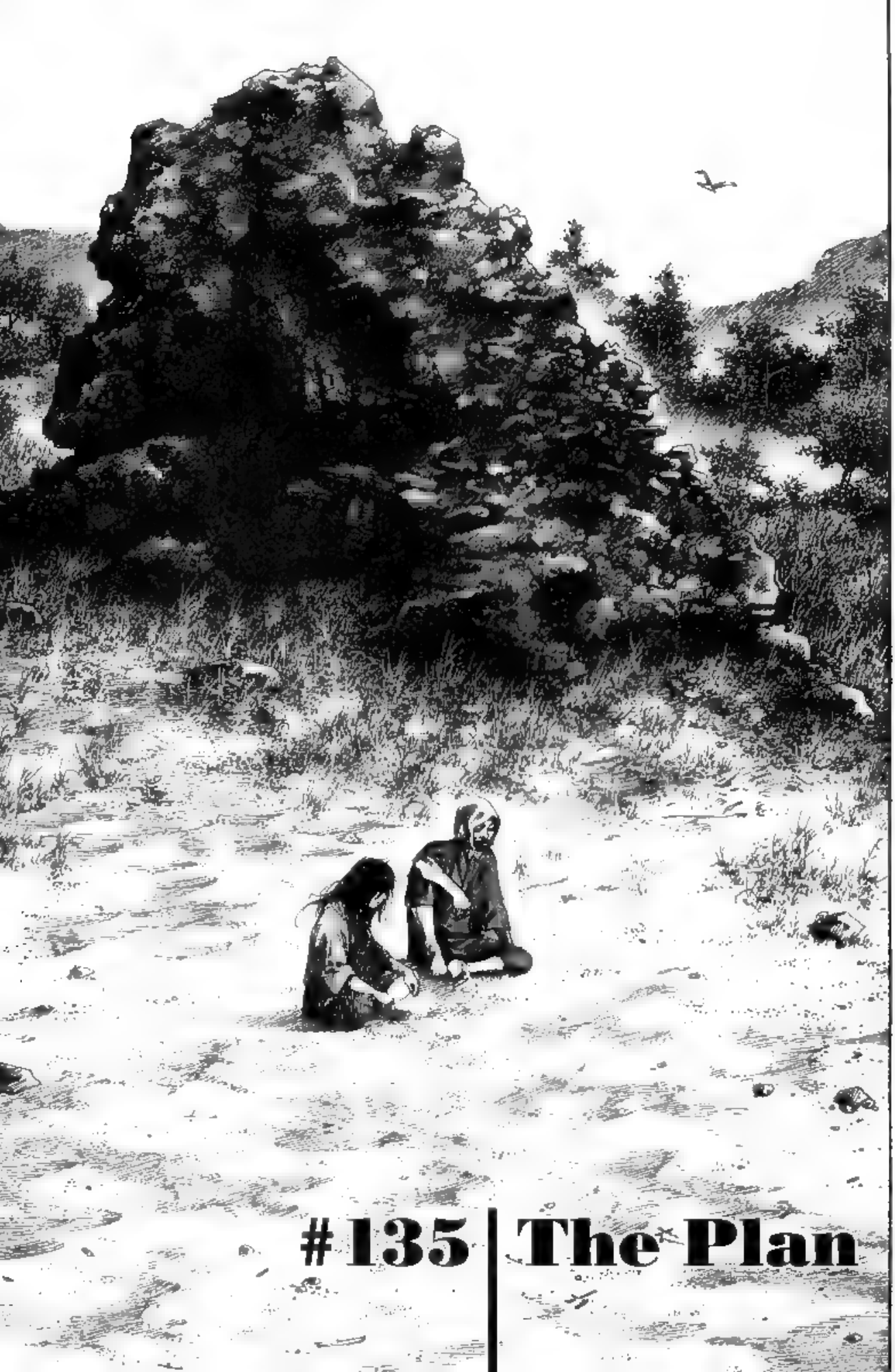
PLISH
PLISH

!

FSSSHH

Vagabond

(SWORD)
けん



#135 | The Plan

I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY MORE!!

DAMN HIM! HE'S NOT OUR MASTER!
HE DOESN'T PROTECT US!!
SHH!! LOWER YOUR VOICE!!

FUDŌ CHOPPED OFF HIS ARM!
.....

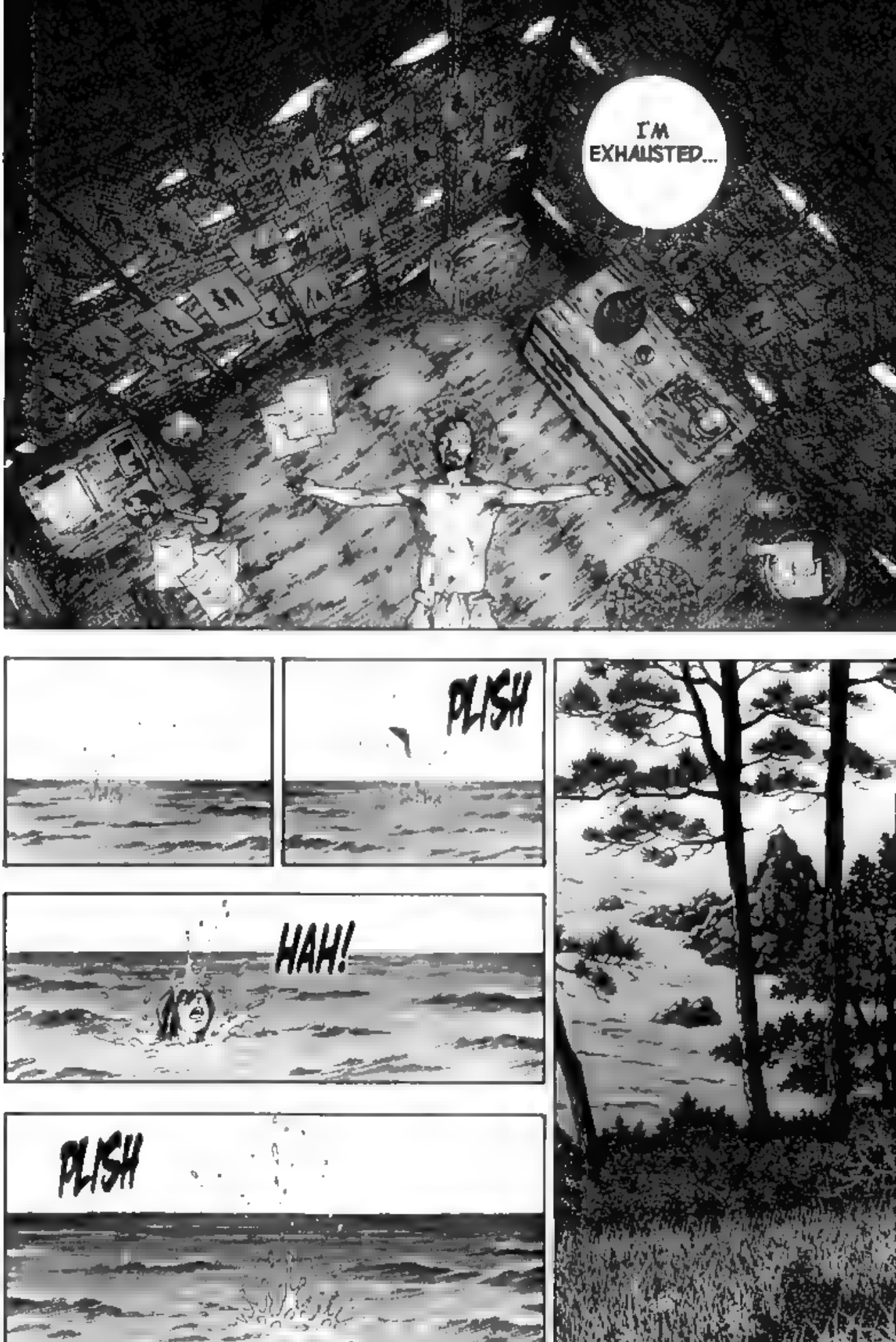
WE'VE GOTTA EAT TOO.
RIGHT ?
WE DONT HAVE AS MUCH TO OFFER TO MASTER FUDŌ.
OUR CATCH OF FISH IS SMALLER THAN IT USUALLY IS...

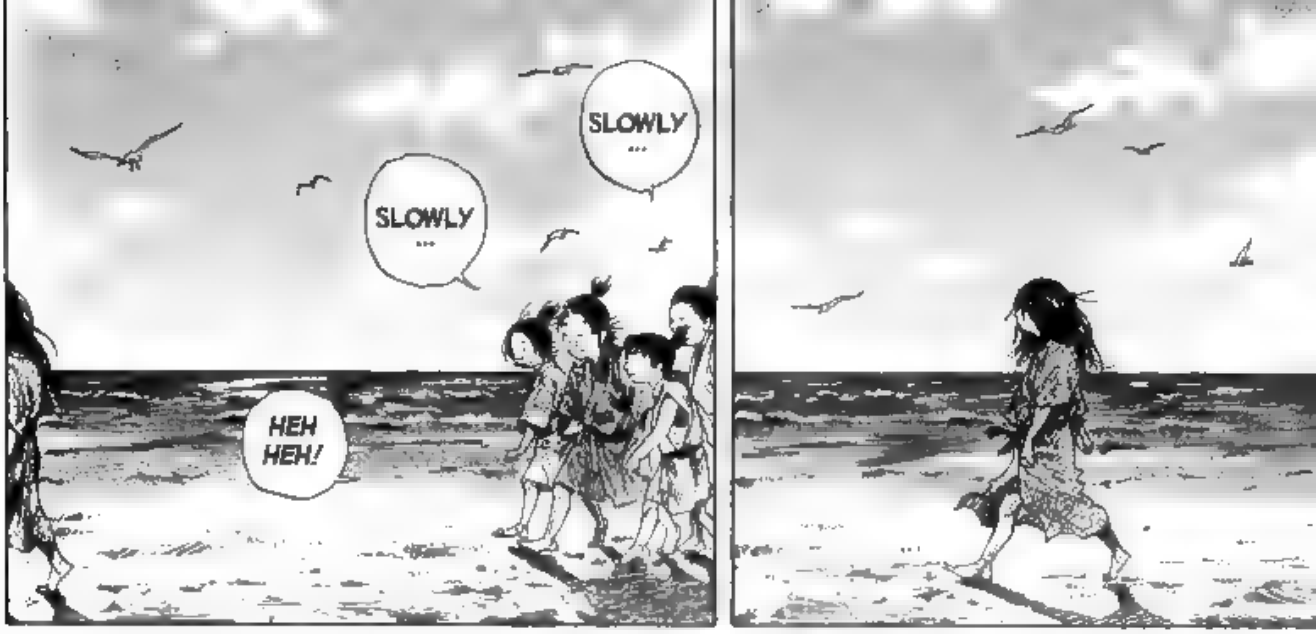
HE ASKED FOR MERCY FOR THIS YEAR'S MEAGER OFFERING ...
...AND...
MY FATHER APOLOGIZED TO HIM...

SO I SHOULD SIT BACK AFTER HE'S CUT OFF MY FATHER'S ARM?!
I'LL KILL HIM!!
IF NO ONE ELSE WILL, THEN IT'S UP TO ME!
SHH!!
GOSUKE, YOU WERE STILL A CHILD SO YOU DON'T REMEMBER ...
WITHOUT MASTER FUDŌ, THIS VILLAGE WOULD HAVE BEEN RAVAGED...
THOSE BANDITS WOULD'VE DESTROYED EVERYTHING.
AND HE CUT THEM DOWN ALL BY HIMSELF...
HE WAS THE VILLAGE'S SAVIOR.
BEAR WITH HIM.
KYŪSAKU, YOUR DAUGHTER JUST HAD A BIRTHDAY, RIGHT?
YOU HAVE TO OFFER HER TO MASTER FUDŌ NOW THAT SHE'S FOURTEEN.
CAN YOU ACCEPT THAT?!
GASP!
GOSUKE!! IF HE HEARS YOU, THEN IT WON'T JUST BE AN ARM YOU'LL LOSE...!!
HMPH !!
.....
ELDER !!
...BUT NOW MASTER FUDŌ IS JUST A PARASITE !!
HE MAY HAVE ONCE BEEN A SAVIOR OF THIS VILLAGE...
CAN'T BE HELPED.

THAT HAPPENED OVER TEN YEARS AGO...
WE'VE PAID HIM BACK...
!!
ELDER ...!!
BUT, GOSUKE ...
AN AMATEUR SWORDSMAN LIKE YOU WOULD BE NO MATCH AGAINST HIM.
AFTER ALL, HE'S FORMIDABLE ENOUGH TO CALL HIMSELF A SERVANT OF FUDO-MYO-O, THE BUDDHIST DEITY OF THE MARTIAL ARTS.
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

I HAVE A PLAN.
THEN WHO CAN--?
SLUMP
WE'RE OUT OF FOOD.


I'M EXHAUSTED...
PLISH
HAH!
PLISH


SLOWLY...
SLOWLY...
HEH HEH!

SNIF SNIF
HE CAN'T HEAR US ANYWAY!
FILTHY CRAZY COOT'S KID!
CRAZY OLD COOT'S KID!
CRAZY OLD COOT'S KID!

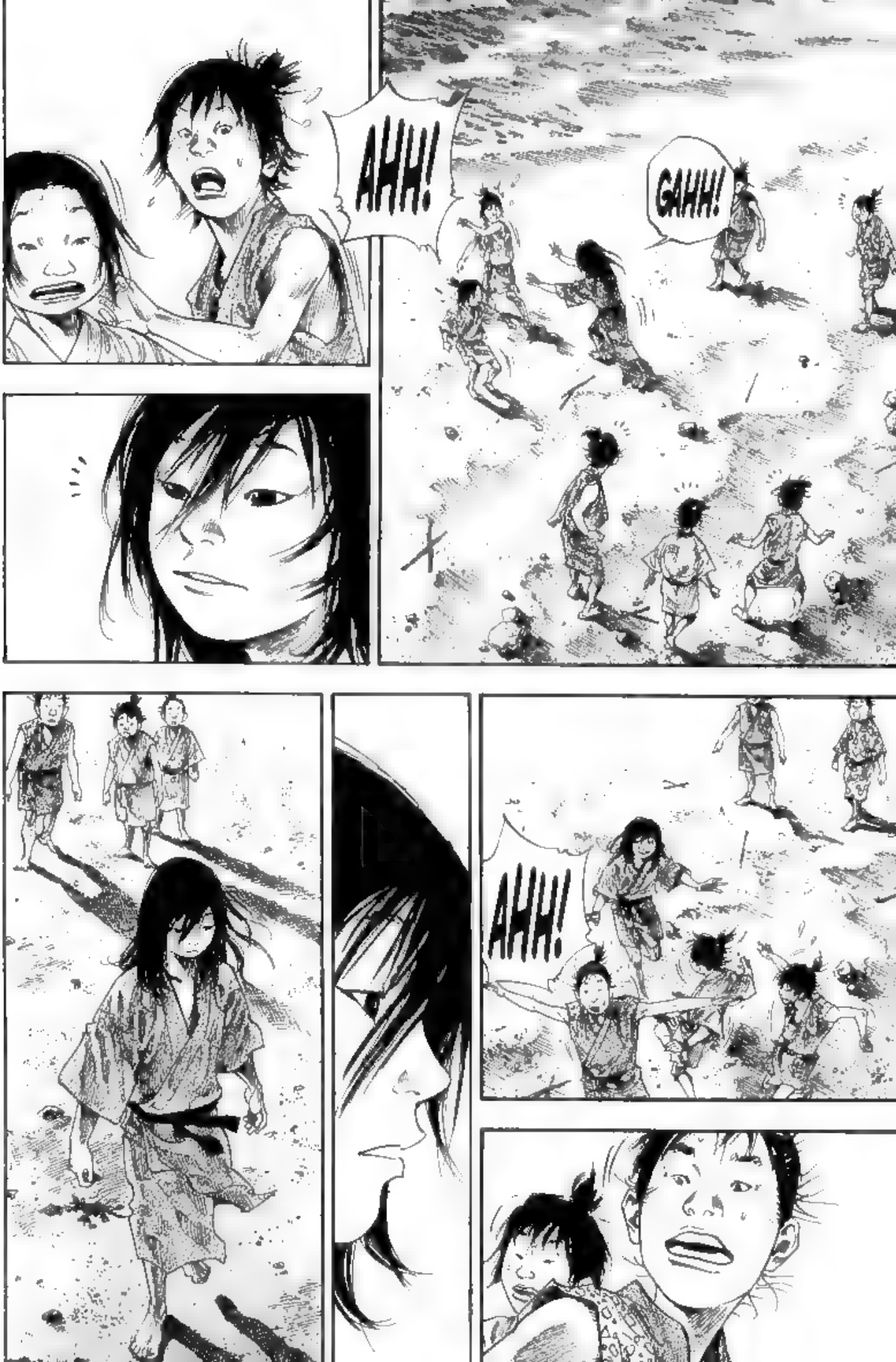
GASP!

YAHH!

!

YOU'RE DIRTYING UP THE SEA.
GO AWAY.

YOU STINK!
SMELLY SMELLY...
FREAK'S KID!
AND YOU'RE DEAF!

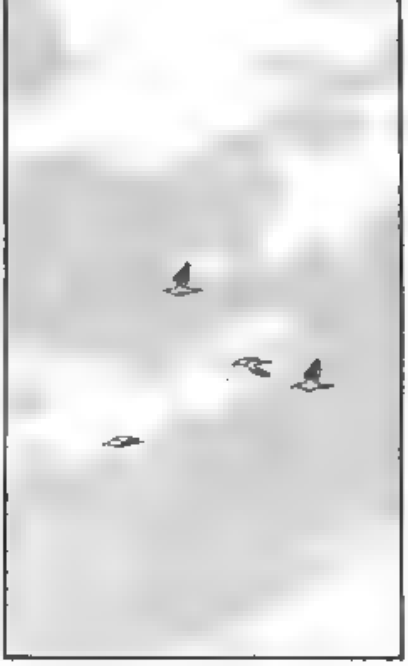

AHH!
GAHH!
AHH!

FSSH
FSSH
THWUP
YEAH!
HA HA!

I-TA-I (PAIN)

I KNEW HE WASN'T SO TOUGH.
WHO SPREAD THAT RUMOR ANYWAY?
YOU WERE JUST SCARED 'CAUSE HE'S BIGGER THAN YOU.
WAS NOT!
RUN AWAY!
YAHH!
HA HA HA HA!
THUD
FWAK
GASP!
...?!
FSSSSHH

ARRGH!
YOU CAN'T EVEN HEAR
NNGH!
SPLUSH!
GASP!
FSSSH
PLSSH
THOK
ARGH!
AHH!



.....

IT'S NOT LIKE WE HAVE MUCH FOOD TO SPARE...
OUR KIDS ARE GETTING BIGGER...
.....

WE CAN'T REALLY AFFORD TO HELP OUT ANYONE...
...THIS VILLAGE IS IN BIG TROUBLE ON ACCOUNT OF MASTER FUDÔ...
AND IT MIGHT NOT HAVE MUCH TO DO WITH YOU, BUT...

!
TUMP

FWUMP

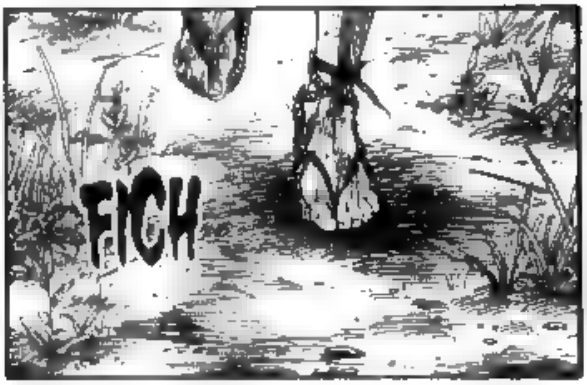
PHEW...

FWMP
I'M SORRY.
OH...
AMAZING HOW QUICKLY THEY GROW UP...
.....
MY OLDEST GIRL, ORIN.
YOU KNOW HER.
WHO'S THAT?

SHE SMELLED SO NICE...

WOULDN'T HAVE NO WORRIES IF SHE'D JUST STAY A CHILD...

DIDN'T COME UP WITH ANY SOLUTIONS LAST NIGHT...


FICH

...!!

WE LIVE SO CLOSE AND YET THIS IS OUR FIRST MEETING.
KANEMAKI JISAI...

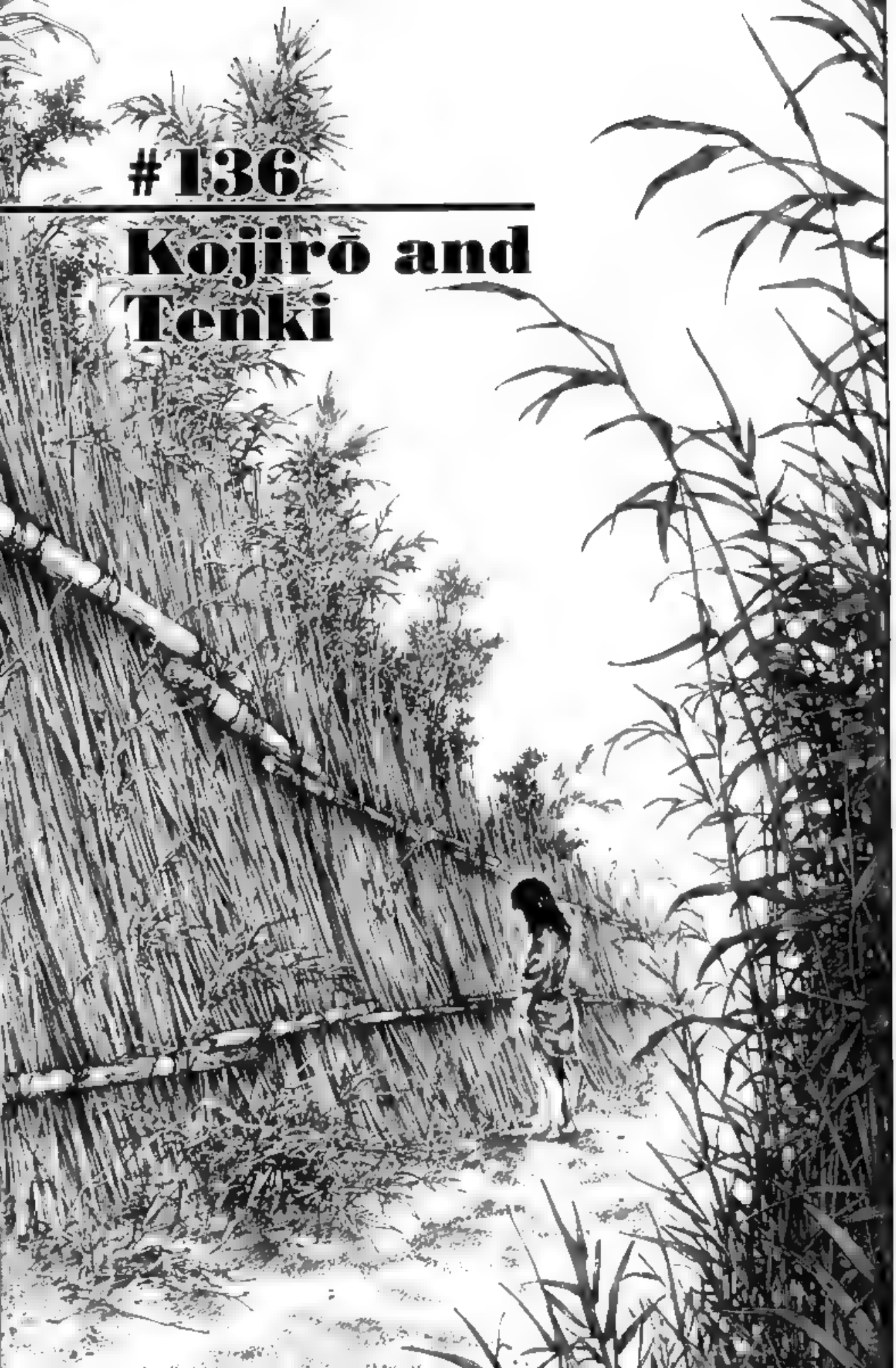
WHO ARE YOU?

FSH
!!
FICH

YOU WIN...

Vagabond

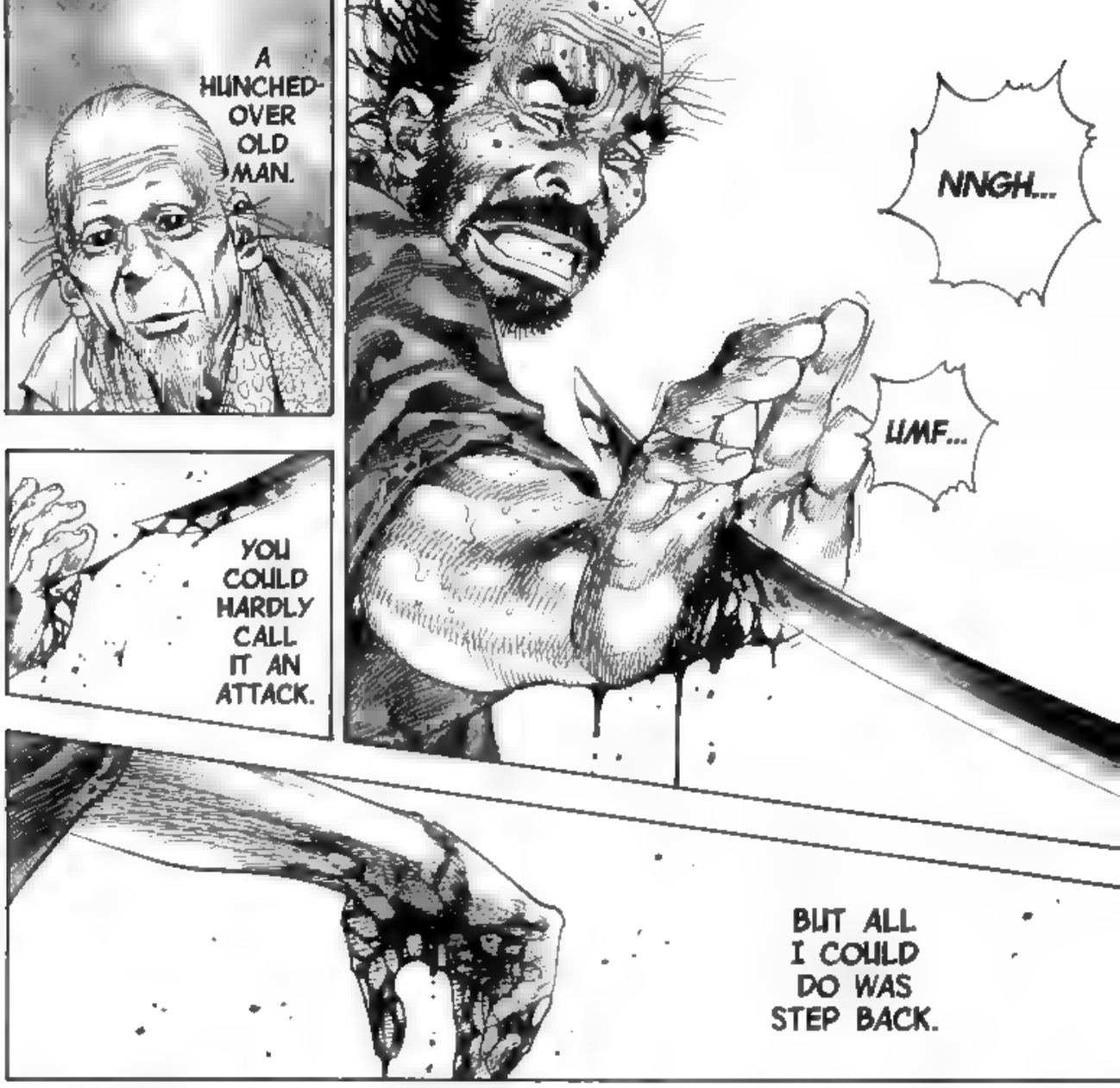
(SNIF...)



#136
Kojirō and Tenki

HMF!
HMF!
HMF!
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
DID YOU MAKE THAT YOURSELF?
SO THERE'S A SWORD IN THAT CANE...
.....
HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU, OLD MAN?!
HMF!
HEY!
HMF!
I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING TO YOU!
?!
I WANT TO TEST YOUR SKILL.

HEY!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, OLD MAN?!
WAIT!!
FICH
FICH
YAHHH!!
YAH!
THUNK


A HUNCHED-OVER OLD MAN.
NNGH...
UMF...
YOU COULD HARDLY CALL IT AN ATTACK.
BUT ALL I COULD DO WAS STEP BACK.

MY INSTINCTS HAVE GOTTEN RUSTY...!!
ALL THESE MOVES OCCUR TO ME AT ONCE...
WHO
I COULD GRAB A ROCK AND TOSS IT...
...OR THROW THIS BAG AT HIM...
...OR I COULD RUN INTO THE WOODS AND USE THE TREES AS COVER.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, OLD MAN?!
YAHH!!

SWIP
.....

MAGNIFICENT ...
KANEMAKI JISAI...

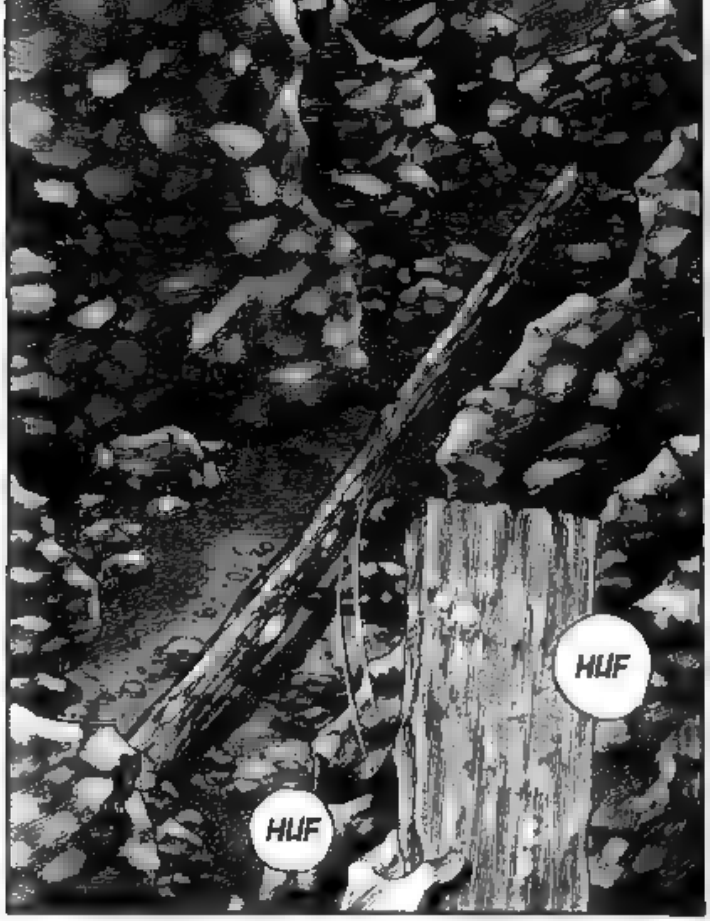
PLEASE, YOU MUST SAVE OUR VILLAGE...

HUH?

.....
HEY...
HEY, WHAT'RE YOU GUYS DOING?
FINCH
KAMEKICHI !!
YAHH!

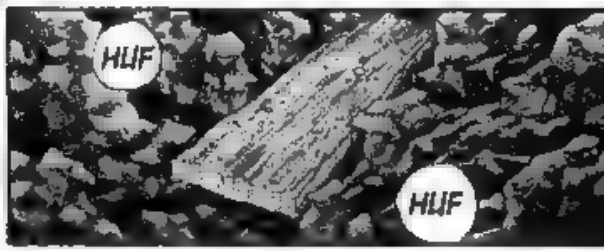
THOK
ARGH!
TE-TENKI...
THAT HURT...
I TOLD YOU TO CALL ME TENKI!
I TRAINED MYSELF CHOPPING THE TALL GRASS OF SHINPO VILLAGE...
LIKE A DEMON DESCENDED FROM THE HEAVENS!
KUSANAGI TENKI, THE SWORD DEMON! I STARTED CALLING MYSELF THAT YESTERDAY, REMEMBER?!
SORRY!
HMM...
THE SWORD...
I'M DEVOTING MY LIFE TO THE SWORD.
THAT'S RIGHT.
YUP, IT'S A GOOD NAME.
KUSA-NAGI TENKI!

YOU WANT TO HAVE SOME FUN?
HEY...
WHY'RE YOU GUYS KNEELING IN FRONT OF THE CRAZY OLD COOT'S KID?
.....
HEY...
TMP
HA HA HA! HE'S SCARED ...!!
GOOD GOING, KAME-KICHI!
THWAK
I TOLD YOU TO CALL ME TENKI, YOU IDIOT.


HUF
HUF

HUF

HUF
HUF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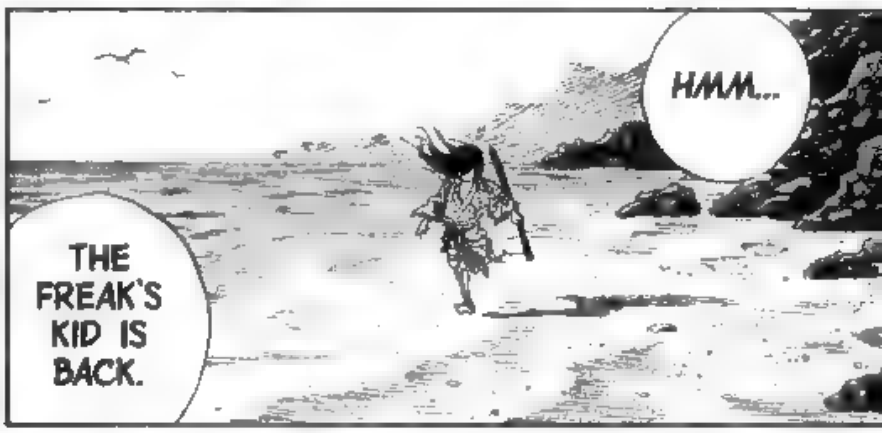

HMM...
THE FREAK'S KID IS BACK.

HUF

HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF

AHHH!

WHOA!!
SWOOSH

!!

HEY, THAT STICK'S TOO LONG FOR YOU!!

GASP!
FICH
NO WARNING, YOU BASTARD?!
NOW YOU'LL GET A TASTE OF TENKI'S SWORD.
FICH
THWAK
HMPH.
HEE!
HEE!

WHAT ?
WHAT WAS THAT, ELDER?
YOU DON'T BELIEVE THAT SIGN HE PUT UP, DO YOU?!
HE'S LYING ABOUT ALL THAT CHŪJŌ-RYŪ NONSENSE!!
KENEMAKI JISAI?
HOW IS THAT OLD COOT GOING TO KILL MASTER FUDŌ?!
...WE'RE NOT INVOLVED.
WE'LL JUST WAIT FOR OUR NEXT OPPOR-TUNITY.
NO, EVEN IF HE FAILS...
AS LONG AS HE SUCCEEDS ...
SILENCE...

FSSSHH
IF THEY CUT EACH OTHER DOWN...
...THAT'S FINE, TOO.
HUF
HUF
YOU'RE BUILT SKINNY LIKE A TWIG.
HOW CAN YOU SWING A LONG POLE LIKE THAT?!
I SUR-RENDER !!
I SUR-RENDER !!
KAME-KICHI!!
THOK
ARRGH!

SOME-ONE, STOP HIM.
STOP HIM!!
THOK
OH, THT'S RIGHT. YOU CANT HEAR.
THOK
HEY!! DIDN'T YOU HEAR WHAT HE SAID?!
ARGH!
HEY!
THOK
FWAK
IT'S TENKI !!
NOW GO HOME!
DON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT THIS!!
GOT IT?!
NOW GO HOME, ALL OF YOU!!
BUT, KAME-KICHI...

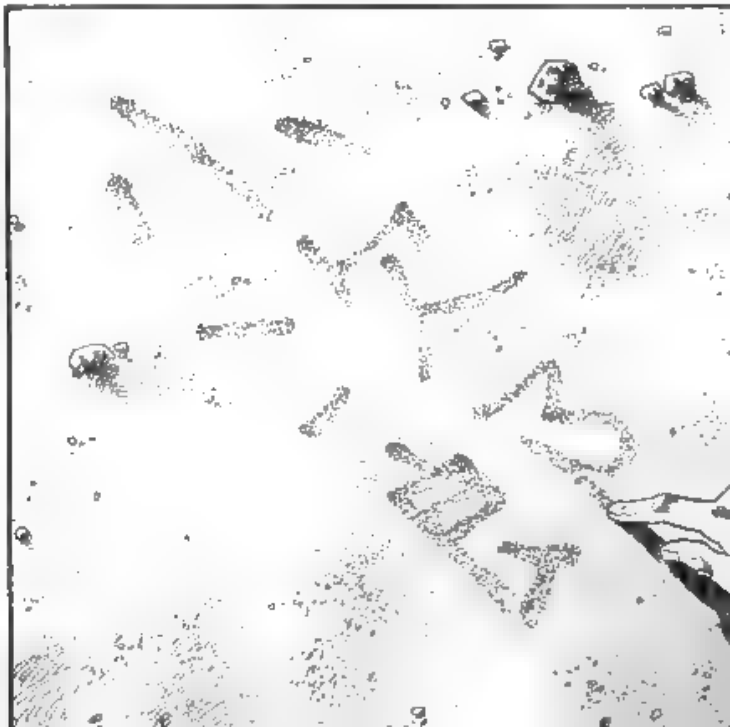
YOU CAN'T HEAR ME.
.....

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

HEY, WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
I CAN'T KEEP CALING YOU "THE FREAK'S KID".

YOUR NAME...
WHAT'S ...
...YOUR ...
...NAME ?

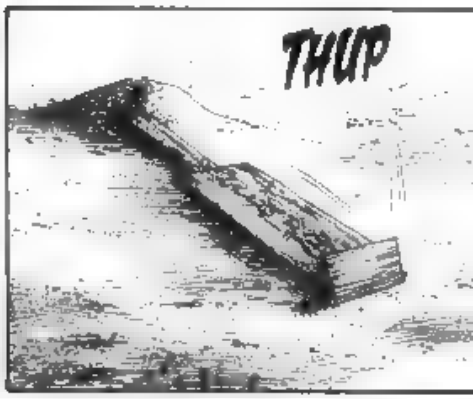
KOJIRŌ



TENKI
.....
KOJIRŌ ...
WILL YOU BE MY MASTER?
RIGHT?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
IT'S A GOOD NAME, HUH?
YOU GOT ME GOOD...
.....

...AS QUICKLY AS I CAN...
I WANT TO BECOME STRONG...
REALLY...

FWEEEE


THUP

KOJIRŌ, PLEASE...
LET ME BE YOUR DISCIPLE...

About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best-selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts award for Manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga for his work on *VAGABOND*. In 2002, *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka award for best manga. In 2003, Inoue was nominated for an Eisner Award for best writer/artist. To date *VAGABOND* has sold over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and Miyamoto Musashi

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting, which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords at once—holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *sumi-e* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films that comprise *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune, were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003 NHK produced the historical period drama, *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this comic are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

Ito Ittosai (Dates unknown)
Founder of the Itto-ryu school of sword fighting. Before establishing his own style, Ittosai is said to have studied a variant of the Chujo-ryu style of sword fighting under Kanemaki Jisai's instruction.

Sasaki Kojiro
The legendary archrival of Miyamoto Musashi. Kojiro is believed to have studied the Chujo-ryu style of swordsmanship under the instruction of either Toda Seigen or Kanemaki Jisai. Kojiro was renowned for his *Tubame-gaeshi*, or "swallow-cut" technique which was inspired by the movement of a swallow in flight.

The Sengoku Period and the Battle of Sekigahara
The Warring States or *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weaker and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the *daimyo* were constantly at war with each other. One *daimyo* in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of all of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating an orderly federation amongst the *daimyo*, and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the *daimyo* from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its five-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major *daimyo* from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key generals at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed as the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan, and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed as the *ometsuke*--responsible for the surveillance of the *daimyo*. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evildoers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's *VAGABOND*, as well as in Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.

editor's choice

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Vagabond

"...Inoue's skills as a comics creator makes *VAGABOND* outstanding. This really is one of the best comics currently being produced. I buy every book as soon as it's published and once you take a look yourself, you'll do the same."
—Greg McElhatton, *icomics.com*

Miyamoto Musashi is destined to be Japan's most celebrated samurai, a man revered as a sword-saint. But every great warrior needs a worthy rival and Sasaki Kojiro is destined to be Musashi's legendary opponent in *the* most well known duel in Japanese history. This volume goes into the background and childhood of the man famed for his deadly "swallow cut" sword stroke.

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